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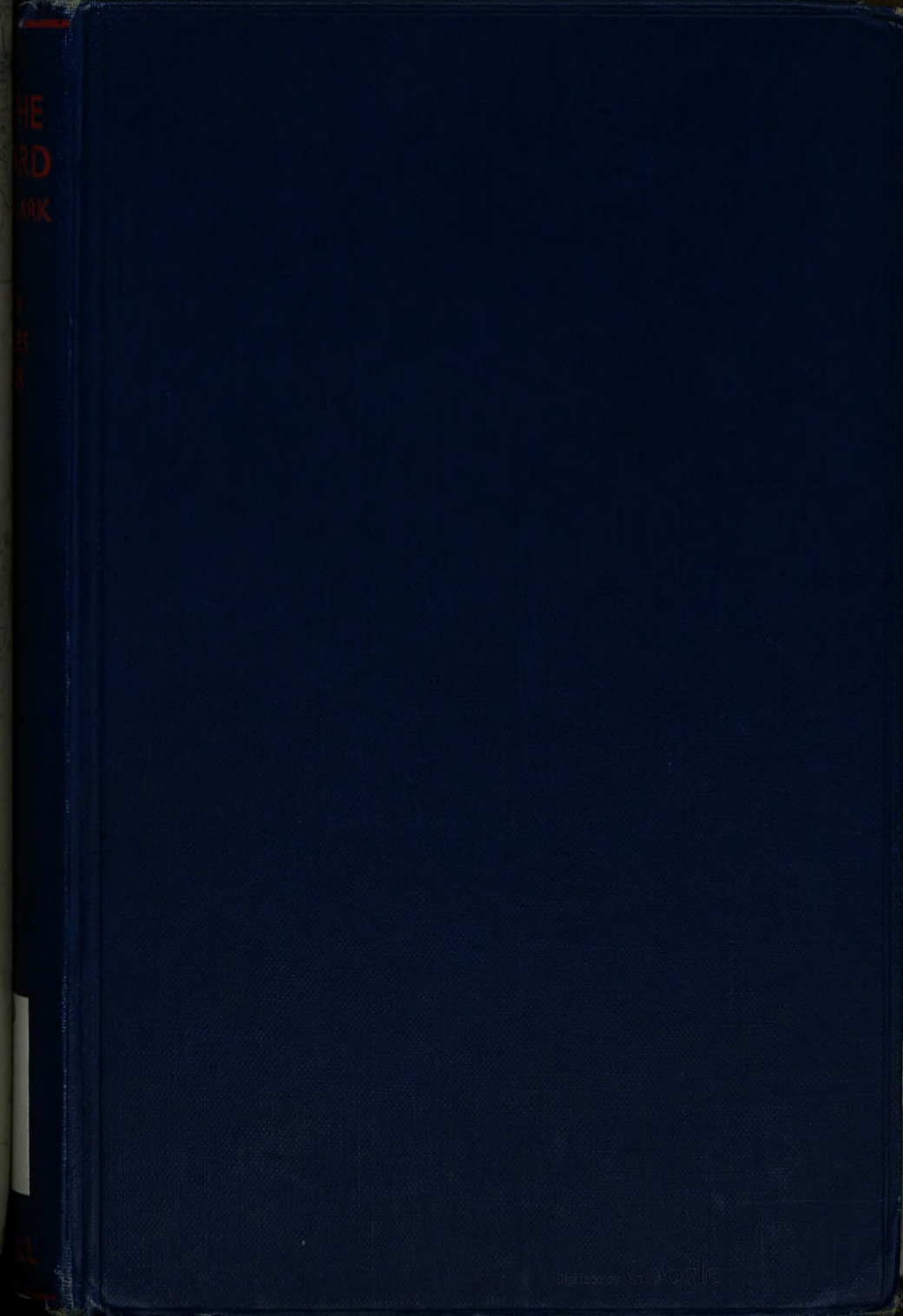
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MARTHE RICHARD

THE SKYLARK

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MARTHE RICHARD
THE SKYLARK

THE FOREMOST WOMAN SPY OF FRANCE

by

MAJOR GEORGES LADOUX
former Chief of the French Intelligence Service

Edited
with a Biographical Introduction and Notes
by
WARRINGTON DAWSON

With frontispiece

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BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE

IT is a singular fact that the principal branches of the French Intelligence Service, during the World War, successively had one same man as either their chief or their creator: Captain Georges Ladoux. Among them may be mentioned the Telegraphic Censorship, the Counter-Espionage Service, the Defence Against Contraband of War, Air Propaganda Across the Enemy's Lines, the Espionage or Intelligence Service and the "Fifth Bureau," often miscalled the "Second Bureau." He also had part in organizing and conducting the Inter-Allied Bureau.

And if authoritative books about the "Secret War" in France have so far been lacking, it is because Major Ladoux, as he has become, had remained technically on the Army Reserve List as Chief of the French Counter-Espionage Service, resuming his old post automatically, should mobilization be ordered, since the service itself exists actively only when France is on a war footing.

Being to-day definitely retired, Major Ladoux is only now free to speak about his work and that of the agents who served under him.

The whole story will of course never be written. Even in times of peace there are things about the "Secret War" which must be left unsaid. But there are infinitely more things which can and should be known, in the higher interest of the public and of world-peace itself, and against whose publication no objection will be raised by the French General Staff.

It is a corner of this veil—to borrow the expression used by Major Ladoux—which he raises in telling the

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authentic and surprising story of "Marthe Richard the Skylark," a double-agent who served both France and Germany, but from devotion to France, during the years 1916 and 1917 in Spain.

Dramatic as is its setting, and sensational as some of its episodes may be, this book is consequently not a "romanced biography," just as the name Georges Ladoux is not a pseudonym. I may add that Major Ladoux himself and many of his characters are personally well known to me; and certain incidents he relates, never before made public, have long been familiar to me, at least in their essentials.

I have often seen Marthe Richard and talked with her, hearing from her own lips accounts of her adventures which her biographer has related with rigorous accuracy in the pages which follow. I can furthermore vouch for the fact that even her psychology has been traced as faithfully as would have been possible for a skilled novelist. Those "silences" of hers, notably, are among the most singular traits I have ever encountered in a human being. But how Marthe can talk when she gets really warmed up!

I know Zozo, too, under his own name, which is not given here; and I have tried to follow, breathlessly, the wild flights and plunges of his thought as he discoursed to me on Life and Man, and the Social Order for which he shows an excellent respect in application. I may add that he is the conscientious father of two fine boys who both take after him, in their respective ways, and with whom he never seems to have any differences except over politics or if perchance they appear disposed to be momentarily undutiful.

There is also the peerless "Pedroso," who has returned to private life as a prosperous and indeed influential personage, thanks entirely to his own wit and industry. If anybody has deserved to succeed in life, it is certainly Pedroso.

And although I was so fortunate as never to meet

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either " Commander Baron von Kolberg " or " Major Count von Strasse," I would remark that their true names and titles are known to me.

As for Major Ladoux himself, I was introduced to him just a few days after Joffre had appointed him to organize the Telegraphic Censorship service, early in August, 1914. We were constantly together during the tragic days which followed and until Joffre's order for the Battle of the Marne brought new hope to France and her Allies. Confident in the result, for he knew both the strategic ability of Joffre and the resources of the French Army even under full retreat, Ladoux said to me on that night of Sept. 4th, 1914:

" Here is a prophecy of which you may take note. The Prussian military prestige will reach its highest point by September 6th, and whatever Prussia may have accomplished up to then, she will pay so heavy a price for all she may do afterwards, that her star will steadily wane."

During the very darkest hours, he had agreed to keep a place for me in his car which would leave Paris just before the last bridge across the Seine was blown up, should the enemy continue to advance; he was to remain to the very last, sending messages over the wires to the General Staff, and he was then to destroy with his own hands the telegraphic apparatus at the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs, making a dash for freedom—if he could—and taking me with him.

Instead, after the tide had turned at the Marne, I was able to leave Paris very comfortably by train, going to Bordeaux with a mission to put personally into the hands of Georges Clemenceau a secret letter from Captain Ladoux, who at the time prophetically described " The Tiger " to me as " the man of bed-rock character whom France will reserve as her supreme resource in her hours of greatest need."

The intimate terms on which I had lived with Captain Ladoux during that period, when men could

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learn really to know each other as they do in a wilderness, or under any conditions of exceptional stress, caused me to remain in touch with him, as he passed rapidly up step by step in his remarkable career.

Just as I had heard early reports of the " defeatist peace " drive attempted in the spring of 1915, so I learned, in 1917, of the intrigues for turning Captain Ladoux out of office. It was obvious to me, as to others who had had an opportunity to judge his work from the inside, that he was a particularly formidable adversary for the Central Empires, and that if he could be eliminated no successor of similar calibre was likely to be found.

Unfortunately, there were not lacking persons in France who, unaware of the source from which sundry charges had been trumped up against the Chief of the Intelligence Service, concluded that he was " not a safe man to deal with." Such were the words in which whispered warnings were passed on to me. But with me they were ineffective because I really knew the man. I was therefore not entirely surprised, though greatly shocked, when, calling at his office one afternoon, at the end of October, 1917, I was greeted by the startled faces of the non-commissioned officers who usually ushered me in as soon as I appeared, but who now told me that Captain Ladoux was " out " and was not expected back.

What followed was so closely bound up not only with the story of Marthe Richard herself, but with the evolution of the French Intelligence Service and indeed with the termination of the World War, that it seems advisable to retrace rapidly here the career of Georges Ladoux.

Born at Beauchastel, in the Ardèche Department, southern France, in 1875, Georges Ladoux came of a family of Army officers. His father, Major Eugène Ladoux, had commanded the 7th Battalion of Chasseurs ; General Ladoux was his uncle ; his grand-

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father, Colonel Ladoux, had participated in the Mexican and Italian campaigns. But on his mother's side, he inherited artistic and intellectual traditions from a grandfather who had graduated first of his class at the École des Arts et Métiers and had held an official position as civil engineer; one of his mother's brothers was a painter and poet; another, a graduate of the École des Chartes, became Professor of History and Philosophy at Perpignan, the birthplace of Joffre.

Georges Ladoux, inspired by military ambitions but never losing the arts from view, began his education at the Lycée of Nice, where he was privileged to have as Professor of Literature the distinguished writer and critic, André Bellessort.

"If I speak French more or less correctly to-day, I owe it to him," Ladoux once said to me. Perhaps that same early influence is seen in the vividness which went into the writing of "Marthe Richard."

Graduated from St. Cyr in 1897, he was commissioned in the 7th Chasseurs, which his father had commanded, and was appointed in 1904 Professor at St. Cyr; two years later his name was put at the head of the list for promotion as captain.

After serving in this capacity with the 8th Chasseurs, Captain Ladoux became an aide-de-camp to Monsieur Berteaux, Minister of War, and next was attached as aide to General Dubail, in the offices of the Chief of the General Staff. General Joffre, to whose attention this exceptionally gifted young officer had been called, then selected him as Director of Military Instruction, École Normale Supérieure, which Ladoux filled until the beginning of 1914 when he was appointed aide-de-camp to Monsieur Noulens, Minister of War.

In the month of May, his military prospects were excellent, since his name was to be listed for promotion as one of the youngest majors in the army. Looking back, he could say that he had occupied the most mportant posts to which an ambitious young officer

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could aspire in France. Therefore prospects of a monotonous life in a garrison town on the peace footing did not appeal to him. Doubtless, too, the artistic and intellectual strain in his blood called aloud for the opportunity which had to some extent been denied it in the pursuit of a purely military career. His marriage had furthermore increased this tendency, for it should be explained that Madame Ladoux is an artist of distinction, whose sculpture has received awards at the *Salon des Artistes Français:* her best-known work is perhaps the charming fountain "The Child with the Shell," in the Park at Aix-les-Bains.

So it came about that Captain Ladoux decided to try his hand at journalism, possibly as a stepping-stone towards politics and a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. Acting against the advice of his friends and superior officers, but with the consent of the latter, he secured a year's leave from the army, without pay, and was appointed assistant editor of the Paris *Le Radical.* His position enabled him also to keep an eye on the Bourse and to manage the fortune enjoyed in common by his wife and himself.

At the beginning of August, 1914, Captain Ladoux was thus one of the few young French Army officers on the active list having practical and applied knowledge of both journalism and business, in addition to his experience as aide-de-camp to generals in prominent positions and to two different Ministers of War.

Two grave events, immediately preceding the outbreak of hostilities, furthermore gave him an opportunity to display his characteristic spirit of prompt decision.

One day, towards the end of July, he was passing by the Bourse when he witnessed an extraordinary scene. An Austrian broker named Rosenberg, suspected because of his nationality, was being mobbed. One of the Bourse guards, who had served at St. Cyr as an adjutant while Ladoux himself was at the school, ran up to him exclaiming, "Captain, the situation has

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got beyond my control, that man will be killed." Some persons in the crowd were already snatching up benches as weapons in a free fight.

In a flash, Ladoux saw that such an incident, if allowed to run its course, might precipitate a declaration of war by the Central Empires. He alone of all present kept his head. While others were losing precious time and increasing the confusion by joining in the fight or else vociferating, he had realized that qualified representatives of the Law could alone restore order. He telephoned first to the Ministry of the Interior; they were closed for the lunch-hour; then to Prefect of Police Hennion, who promptly rescued Rosenberg and cleared the Bourse of rioters.

On July 31, the Socialist leader Jean Jaurès was assassinated by Raoul Villain under the windows of the room occupied by Ladoux at *Le Radical*. Forty-eight hours before his death, Jaurès had declared in Brussels: "At the present moment the French Government wants peace and is working to maintain peace."

The restraining influence exercised by him upon the Socialists being removed, a dangerous domestic situation was precipitated at the very hour when the international strain was gravest. Captain Ladoux personally called on Minister of War Messimy, an old friend of his, to give him the news and to suggest the lines on which the assassination should be handled in the Press. But he also urged that the troops must be ordered out, so as to hold certain strategic points in Paris, such as the Place du Carrousel; and above all, he insisted that false rumours to the effect that the murderer was affiliated with *L'Action Française* must be silenced, or the population would be exasperated into a violent outbreak.

All these propositions were accepted and executed in strict conformity with the plan which Captain Ladoux had rapidly traced.

It was also he who brought to the Ministry of War,

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on July 31 at about 2 p.m., the first news, secured from a private source, that Germany had issued the orders for the "state of menace of war" which left France no alternative but to call out her covering troops, even though mobilization was not yet ordered.

Such was the man whom General Joffre appointed, on August 4, 1914, to organize a Press Censorship Bureau with the collaboration of several other officers and newspaper men, to be followed within a few days by the order for him to take complete charge of the Telegraphic Censorship Service.

Captain Ladoux then faced a wellnigh desperate situation which became only more acute and more complex when he was appointed, in 1915, Chief of the Counter-Espionage Service. The Dreyfus Case had, among other results, disorganized the old Military Intelligence Services, whose powers had been handed over to the *Sûreté Générale*. As a matter of fact, France had practically no Secret Service left. A list had been compiled of about a hundred political suspects, most of whom, being foreigners, had eclipsed themselves across the frontier at the first sign of trouble. But there were no French secret agents abroad, there was not even the skeleton of an adequate organization at home, nor was any technical knowledge available concerning codes or secret inks or reagents.

Ladoux created the necessary services, recruiting agents and gathering knowledge as he went along. A certain amount of risk was inevitable, but the alternative was the near-certainty that the nation would perish if left defenceless while an active and perfectly manned "Secret War" was conducted against it, both within and beyond its frontiers. That he succeeded is evidenced by the fact that he and the services he had created brought more than five hundred enemy agents to justice, including Mata-Hari and Duval, the associate of Almereyda, Emilio Fuentès and the Manzanarès sisters, mentioned in the present book.

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Among the agents whom he employed, and whose work he will himself relate in due course, Marthe Richard and Zozo being only two from the many who were both skilful and loyal to the core, one alone proved to be wholly unworthy of his confidence, and this man was not strictly speaking an agent but was employed in the translation service. And yet, the unfortunate Pierre Lenoir, morphinomaniac son of a millionaire advertising agent who operated on behalf of the French Ministry of Finance and the big Paris banks, offered such guarantees of trustworthiness, through his family and personal connexions, as no regular agent could have shown.

Nor had he even been sought out or selected by Ladoux. They met for the first time when Pierre Lenoir was assigned for military duty as chauffeur of the car for the Chief of the Telegraphic Censorship. As Lenoir knew English thoroughly, at a period when thousands of telegrams in English were passing daily through the hands of the censors who had not a sufficient English-reading staff at their disposal, and as Lenoir was in such frail health that he needed an assistant for running the high-powered military car, Ladoux, being well disposed towards him on the strength of a warm personal endorsement from an influential Senator, named Perchot, transferred him to the Censorship Bureau.

Lenoir did his work satisfactorily. He was regular in his hours and was thoroughly familiar with Bourse operations, the telegrams he handled dealing mainly with arbitrations of exchange. But being free from Friday afternoon until Monday morning each week, because of the closing of the Bourse, he went several times to Switzerland without warning his chief, and using a false passport. He engaged there in operations with the Swiss, he said, for the recovery of French international trade after the war. He even secured an official mission from the Minister of Armaments,

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Monsieur Albert Thomas, for gathering some information needed in Switzerland. It was then that Captain Ladoux used him to get in touch with a prominent Swiss journalist whose opinions on military matters were followed with deep interest in France.

It became known only later that, under cover of these trips, Pierre Lenoir had negotiated with enemy agents from whom he had received ten million francs to buy a controlling interest in a big Paris daily, being therefore considered guilty of both intelligence and trading with the enemy. But an intermediary named Desouches had been the one to connect with a Turk who may have been the real culprit, and yet who was left undisturbed when Lenoir was brought to trial with Desouches and also with Senator Humbert, who had negotiated on behalf of *Le Journal* with Lenoir but who was the first to denounce him to Ladoux, having decided that something was wrong.

If it had not been for the intrigues already in operation against Captain Ladoux to get him out of office, there could have been no thought of holding him personally responsible for the crime of a subordinate. No action was attempted against Monsieur Albert Thomas, who had sent Lenoir to Switzerland, and who died very recently covered with honours after being for many years a Deputy and President of the International Labour Bureau in Geneva.

But for some time prior to the Lenoir scandal, Captain Ladoux had been receiving information from his own agents, both in Germany and in neutral countries, about plans to compass his disgrace. The rumours fabricated against him for this purpose abroad presently found echoes in France.

In the exercise of his duties, Ladoux had been strictly conscientious—too much so, one of his superiors once remarked: his zeal, exercised regardless of political or other influences where any flaw was detected, proved to be awkward for some people who

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did not choose to be interfered with. A party had therefore been formed against him, just as a clan had been grouped against Joffre by friends of generals who had proved to be inadequate at the front in 1914, and later by disgruntled politicians who failed to receive all the favours they demanded. Joffre had had to reorganize and modernize his Army under the enemy's fire and while the national territory was invaded, even as Ladoux had had to create in action the organs needed for the " Secret War." The reward which came to both was temporary disgrace.

The Chief of the General Staff, desiring to protect Ladoux against these cabals, had appointed him in February, 1917, as Chief of the Intelligence Service. It was from this office that he found himself suspended at the end of October, 1917, but not put under arrest because there was no charge to justify his incarceration. Captain Ladoux indeed remained for some sixteen months without being able to secure trial by court martial to clear his honour. During a great part of that time he was not even reliably informed as to the nature of the charges.

It being found impossible to urge against him any serious accusations in connexion with Pierre Lenoir, other pretexts were in fact being diligently sought in his record, so as to justify retroactively the measures of discipline taken against him. Meanwhile, the plot fomented in the interest of France's adversaries was succeeding admirably, since its aim had been to get him out of office, and he was not only forced out but kept out until the end of the war.

Finally, in January, 1919, he was arrested on the strength of an anonymous document, dating back to March, 1916, and regarded by him and by others at the time as a practical joke. It was the now famous " cryptogramme " addressed by mail under cover of an anonymous letter signed " A Good Frenchwoman," to Senator Charles Humbert, Vice-President of the

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Senate Army Committee and then in control of *Le Journal* of Paris. Humbert had taken it on March 25 to Ladoux, who after examining it himself had handed it next day to the Director of the *Sûreté Générale*, Richard, stating how it had come into his possession and asking that it be deciphered.

Studied successively by Richard and Labussière at the *Sûreté Générale* and by Magnin, chief of the Military Bureau of the Ministry of the Interior, it was finally deciphered by Haverna, the Special Commissioner. His version coincided with that of the British Intelligence Service, to whose experts it was also submitted. It proved to be in English, and the simple Angle Code had been used, which Sir George Aston has described so clearly and fully in his excellent book, " Secret Service."

The cryptogram was a hodge-podge of charges, assertions, and implications, such obvious letters as " Ca," " Po," " Bri," " Cl," etc., referring to Caillaux, Poincaré, Briand, Clemenceau, Malvy, Bülow, and others. Most of these were alleged to be involved in a plot, and there was mention of Antwerp, Briey, and Verdun, as well as of ten million dollars " in the good German bank of Cincinnati."

The text may be judged by the closing paragraphs :

" Ros . . . (Rosenberg) has some millions for the small fry, but that should be amply sufficient. The Count says that Ma . . . (Malvy) might be sounded, but with utmost precautions. It would be better to let Ca . . . (Caillaux) do this. As for Bri . . . (Briand), Bul . . . (Bülow) says it would be wiser to get rid of him as agreed with Miss L . . .

" When all is ready, the Red Flag will be displayed. Hold no meetings before the event, it will be safer so."

If this strange text was of any importance at all, it concerned not the military operations but the safety of the State, a question which the *Sûreté Générale* and the Ministry of the Interior were alone qualified to

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handle. Having thus reported the matter, Ladoux returned to far graver problems he had in hand.

He had forgotten all about so trivial an episode when his friend Priolet was sent to arrest him and conduct him to the Cherche-Midi Prison, on January 2, 1919, under a new dual accusation: suppression of the document, which could not be found although there were several photographs of the original besides the translations; and failure to report the text to his military superiors although he had transmitted it in 1916 to the *Sûreté Générale*.

A singular feature of the entire affair was that at the end of 1918, a copy of the text had been slipped overnight into the files of a totally different case, with which it had nothing to do. The attention of the magistrates was thus opportunely drawn to a new pretext for arresting Captain Ladoux, at the very moment when all other charges against him had broken down. It was one of those events incredible as coincidences, but perfectly logical if assumed to have been planned by somebody having an interest at stake.

The superior officer of Captain Ladoux, Colonel G——, who, in the course of the official investigation, had denied having had any knowledge of the document in March, 1916, contradicted himself when testifying before the court martial at the Lenoir-Desouches-Humbert-Ladoux trial. Witnesses were called who proved that although his memory might be at fault, not only he but other French Intelligence officers had been informed about the document by Captain Ladoux. Colonel G—— expressed regrets for the injury he had done to Ladoux.

As for the missing original of the cryptogram, Ladoux spontaneously declared that he might have burned it together with other papers, which had no direct connexion with his service, and dealt exclusively with political rivalries; he could not see what importance might be attached to the fact, since it was

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known he regarded the cryptogram as a practical joke, and photographs of it had been put on record.

In the course of the trial, Captain Mornet, who acted as Government Commissioner for the prosecution, himself protested against the many injustices done to the fair fame of Captain Ladoux, to whose patriotism and services he paid a tribute while endeavouring to maintain against him, in justification of the sixteen-month prosecution, a minor charge of complaisance, totally out of keeping with Ladoux's character and record. But the evidence was overwhelmingly favourable to Captain Ladoux, and he was acquitted; his complete innocence had been demonstrated with flawless logic by his counsel, Maître Henry Bonnet. Desouches was condemned to five years' imprisonment for trading with the enemy, and Senator Humbert was released, by the "minority of favour" usage at French courts martial—that is, the majority against him being too small to suffice on a capital charge. As for Pierre Lenoir, he was condemned to execution at the hands of the Vincennes firing squad.

Reinstated in the army with the rank of major, and awarded the ribbon of Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, Ladoux was furthermore restored technically to his former position in the event of mobilization, as I have already said. But if a grave human injustice was thereby repaired, harm had been done for which there could be no atonement.

The abrupt removal of their chief from office had been followed by swift and deplorable reactions among the agents Ladoux had sent abroad and on whom France mainly depended for information about the adversary's plans and movements. Fearing lest they be unjustly suspected in their turn, these agents began to clamour for permission to come home, or else they resigned on the spot. Some were arrested for no particular reason upon reaching France, others were taken back to the frontier. Finally, certain of them

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hid in neutral countries or even in the Central Empires where they had been stationed.

By the end of 1917, the entire French Intelligence Service was dislocated, and a lack of self-confidence reigned among the officers and the agents. The only way to avoid possibly grave personal consequences, it appeared, was to avoid initiatives. And so, at the critical period when victory was almost at the door: half-heartedness and inexperience prevailed where there had been a maximum of skill and activity. From all the services built up by Georges Ladoux, or suggested by him, only two continued to operate with unimpaired efficiency.

One concerned the operations for the Economic War, the need for which among the Allies, to offset the plans perfected by Germany prior to the outbreak of hostilities, had been grasped by Ladoux as early as August, 1914. I know, because it is a problem he discussed with me at the time, questioning me as to America's probable attitude.

The other concerned Air Propaganda Across the Enemy's Lines, which he created with the help of Professor Tonnelat and of the famous Alsatian caricaturist, Hansi. It rendered important service to all the Allies. Notably by distributing President Wilson's appeals and messages, it helped to prepare the German Revolution. Lord Northcliffe was so impressed by the degree of perfection attained, that he invited Professor Tonnelat to come to London to explain the conditions under which the work was executed.

But meanwhile, France was no longer in a position to know just how far this subversive work had borne fruit.* She had no secret agents at all left in Germany, and had relatively few in neutral countries. Therefore in October, 1918, the commanders of the various

* In this connexion see notably "The War Memoirs of William Graves Sharp, American Ambassador to France 1914–1919," edited by Warrington Dawson.

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French armies, victorious as they were in their respective districts, continued to expect a winter campaign and to prepare for it. There were rumours about the condition of domestic unrest in Germany, but there was the certainty that the German armies were putting up an admirable resistance and that while yielding ground they were in no way demoralized.

If the Allies had known as much about Germany's true condition during the days which immediately preceded November 11, 1918, as was known that day at 11.05 a.m., it may be asserted that the Armistice conditions would not have been exactly the ones which paved the way for the Treaty of Versailles.

Therefore a question has long existed in my mind as to the effect which the unjust and inopportune temporary disgrace of Georges Ladoux may have had upon the Peace.

It is my firm belief that if he had remained undisturbed in office, enjoying the complete confidence of his superiors and the ardent devotion of his expert secret agents, we should all be living in a happier, more peaceful, and perhaps more prosperous world to-day.

In conclusion, the story which follows was edited and translated from the original manuscript. The text accordingly contains a number of passages not to be found in the French version.

I have even been able to include, with the assent of Major Ladoux, certain details, not in the manuscript, which I learned from the heroine herself.

Foremost among these is the epic adventure of little Flot, the Pomeranian, crossing the Pyrenees afoot over the stones and snow and ice, in the wake of his beloved mistress, Marthe Richard the Skylark.

WARRINGTON DAWSON

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MARTHE RICHARD THE SKYLARK

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECRET WAR

BEFORE taking up the story of Marthe Richard, it may be well for me to tear aside some of the veils which have so far remained closely drawn over the Secret War in which she played a part.

To begin with, a clear distinction must be established between espionage and the other operations of the Secret War, since espionage is only one of the means employed.

The Secret War is a latent and endemic condition serving as the warp on which writers weave their novels and histories. It is, furthermore, the truest sign by which man may be differentiated from animals.

A beast fights only to preserve his existence or to perpetuate his race. Whether victorious or overcome, he forgets the fight as soon as it is ended, and he remembers it again only on the day when he is brought back to it by instincts of self-preservation or of procreation.

Man, on the contrary, never ceases to be a wolf where other men are concerned. Invoking some ill-defined but as it were royal prerogative, he invariably claims more food than is necessary to keep him alive, and more love than he is capable of reciprocating.

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There being abundant evidence to prove the above facts, we may conclude that the Secret War is the sum of the continuous actions and the ever more highly perfected and dangerous methods by which individuals and peoples can prepare for the extermination of their fellows, whether in the form of individual or of collective murder. In both the aim is the same, the only difference being in the power and the variety of the means employed.

Too strict a limitation is consequently put on the domain of the Secret War, if one attempts to regard it exclusively as the scene of espionage—that is to say, the acts by which a man or a nation secretly studies the forces of an adversary, the better to destroy him. Such an interpretation would signify reducing the whole to the simple action of an animal which seeks concealment and advances cautiously, to make sure of surprising its prey.

The domain of the Secret War, like that of military campaigns, comprises all the territories on which human activities are manifested; and it resorts to all the forces which are being constantly multiplied and intensified by scientific research. As soon as new forces are released from the bonds of brute matter which had compressed them, they are hurled, barely awakened, on the vast battle-field of world competition.

Therefore the chief of a modern Secret War Service needs to have at his command knowledge as varied and as extensive as the head of a nation, for he is in fact the watchman of the nation. Our British friends perfectly understood this, when creating and developing their Intelligence Service, which, divided into five sections, Naval, Military, Diplomatic, Colonial, and Economic, has been from generation to generation the look-out on the prow of their Ship of State.

Such is the real significance of the Secret War, whose importance and whose perils are consequently

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ignored when it is represented in the symbolical guise of a dancer with golden slippers, who seeks to pluck from the lips of a chance lover the secret of the exact location of an army corps.

During the World War, our Intelligence Service, and also doubtless that of our adversaries, produced far better agents than Mata-Hari the "Versager"—that is to say, "the Dud," as she was picturesquely nicknamed by her former espionage chief, the famous and distinguished "Fräulein Doktor" of the German G.H.Q.

How, then, can the history of the Secret War be written?

Individual secret warfare—that is to say, murder—has given birth in all countries to a flourishing school of writers who devote themselves to police court novels and history, analysing the motives for crimes and seeking to establish the means employed.

But collective secret warfare has not yet found either its novelists or its historians, in France at all events.

As concerns the historical aspect, this seems readily comprehensible. Professional secrecy binds all those who have participated in the great drama, and so far nobody has dared come forward to describe its scenes, which are often so intensely dramatic, or to name its actors, who are sometimes astonishingly courageous and enterprising.

Thus we are restricted to fictional episodes of spying. Since they are works of sheer imagination, they can have no connexion with realities beyond the exploitation of certain indiscretions which are never complete, or else the police record of an arrested spy, together with the rumours which cannot fail to leak out through the badly joined panels of closed doors. No plant can take root and prosper in soil so poor.

The Secret War has thus given rise to an abundance of comment emanating from people who were never even remotely connected with it. In various countries,

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scores of books have appeared dealing in the most brilliant way not only with battles, but with the mysterious annexes of Espionage and Counter-Espionage.

I confess that I have read many of the latter works with as keen an interest, though perhaps not with so much pleasure, as the picturesque fiction of Fenimore Cooper and Mayne Reid, or the cleverly constructed detective stories of Conan Doyle and Maurice Leblanc.

But certain of these authors will permit me to make a criticism bearing not so much on the form they have chosen, which is often agreeable, as on their subject-matter.

By distorting at will the methods and the action of the Secret War, they have masked the true character, the grave and very earnest character of this highly dangerous form assumed by modern conflicts between nations. It indeed effects compromises with all the evil forces of the soul, while it enslaves science to diabolical purposes of destruction.

As for the books written by genuine French or foreign World War veterans, they have the great merit of seeming, in the midst of the anguish and the varied events from which they sprang, to present a sincere and sometimes deeply moving effort towards the suppression of war. But their drawback is that, apart from the accumulated horror which they inspire, they bring no profound contribution to the research for the causes of war or for the means to do away with its consequences.

I believe that a conscientious study of the true and carefully observed facts of the Secret War may, on the contrary, accomplish such a purpose.

Their origin lies in the conditions themselves which determine great international conflicts: political, economic, moral, and social conditions, with which they remain associated for the entire duration of the hostilities.

Furthermore, the facts of the Secret War continue

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to be a living force even after attaining their end. They thus loom before the historian, like the accursed chain which binds together the eternally damned in the abyss of Dante's sombre Inferno.

They are, in a word, the true conductors, in the dual acceptance of the term, which applies at the same time to the direction and to the transmission of energy.

To be convinced of this, a man need only listen in on any international cable while the storm is at its height, as I personally had occasion to do when, on August 4, 1914, I was ordered by Joffre and Messimy* to take charge of the Paris " Telegraphic Central."

He will find that cable charged with warlike energy, composed of both light and passion at high tension.

I admit that the operation is a dangerous one. I learned this by experience, having nearly been electrocuted because I grasped the wires to establish my first connexion, while neglecting the elementary precaution of isolating myself.

But is it not the duty of a soldier to take no heed for risks, accepting without complaint the situations to which he has been deliberately exposed ? This applies most of all to the soldiers engaged in the Secret War, who died for their country at some moment of their life which has never even been known, and in some forgotten field where no stone marks their obscure and tragic end.

A poisonous atmosphere of blood and of mud has been created round the Secret War. And yet we have seen that its field is vast, and furthermore its

* Minister of War in the Viviani National Defence Cabinet from the outbreak of hostilities until August 25, 1914, when he was replaced by Alexandre Millerand. The Marquis de Messimy, who in the course of his political career did not use his title, had previously been Minister of War during the Agadir crisis in 1911, and had also been replaced by Monsieur Millerand, in January, 1912.

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ground is rich with the blood of the brave who died silently there. Even when they were not very dangerous, they deserved our pity instead of our contempt. They should be allowed to rest in peace, now that they have expiated, rather than be treated with contumely as fit for nothing but the gibbet.

If the souls of the true fighters sometimes touch with the tips of their wings the tomb of the great Unknown Soldier under the Arch of Triumph in the Champs-Elysées, they must send a smile of greeting to that other unknown fighter who saved from destruction a French war factory, sparing the lives of its thousands of workmen ; or that other who, single-handed against twenty, outwitted the sentinels on the earth and the patrols in the air, as he dashed at break of day to blow up a mighty Zeppelin in its hangar.

It is to those men, my comrades in the fray and also in oblivion, that I would dedicate this book.

Not so long before the Big Bertha made its appearance, Jules Verne described in " The Begum's Five Hundred Millions " an aged *savant* who trained his gun against the distant capital of a rival country. But even to-day, we in France do not hold the secret of Krupp's engineers. Nor are we certain that some new invention may not at an early date upset all our notions of ballistics, compelling us to scrap our very latest artillery models.

The mission of the Secret War consists in finding solutions for similar questions as fast as they can arise. And the duty of Intelligence and Counter-Espionage services among the great nations has always been to penetrate the adversary's game without his knowledge, while concealing one's own hand as best one can. It therefore amounts to a gigantic poker party, the stake for which is the very existence of nations ; and the victory often goes to the cleverest, who need not even put down their cards, that is, sacrifice the flower of their race.

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The study of such conditions assuredly merits some moments of attention and even of deep thought.

Whatever the number of distinct aims held in view by the Secret War, there must be an equivalent of specialized services to deal with them. That is why, at the end of the World War, we found ourselves provided with an entire series of more or less well-conducted organizations. They corresponded with the main requirements for the battle as it existed at the period: Military and Naval; Economic and Financial; Political and Diplomatic; and Moral and Social.

1. *Military and Naval.*

Prior to the war, the General Staffs of the Armies and Navies were responsible for conducting the purely military and naval questions involved, and each had a Bureau charged with the study of foreign armies. Most of the information gathered came through the various channels which are still available to-day, that is to say, attentive readings of numerous published texts as follows: accounts of parliamentary debates; the news to be found in the big daily papers; the special military reviews; and military regulations of all sorts.

Organizations had been formed in each country, in time of peace, to specialize on this work. Such were the Second Bureau in France and the Third Bureau in Germany, whose duties consisted in a study of foreign armies, gauging as exactly as possible the strength of adversaries so as to paralyse their action.

But since each country furthermore sought to surround with all possible secrecy certain discoveries and organizations, which endowed it at least temporarily with some superiority over its hypothetical adversaries, the traditional Bureau of Studies came to be supplemented by a Research Bureau, whose duties consisted in trying to discover such secrets. It was this second section devoted to Intelligence work which was generally known as the Espionage Service.

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In France it was the "*Service d'Informations*" of the General Staff; in Germany it was the "*Nachrichten Bureau*" of the General Staff, to which our adversaries added, during the World War, a "Destruction Section."

I shall have occasion to reveal the part played by this last when I describe, a little later, the formidable offensive launched by Ludendorff in 1917 against our war manufactories. I shall also tell about the remarkable way in which this unforeseen attack was warded off by a few officers and agents belonging to our "Fifth Bureau."*

As concerned the General Staff, the objectives of the Intelligence Service had in former days been exclusively military, since the Ministries of Marine and for Foreign Affairs, jealously safeguarding their prerogatives, reserved the right to gather political and naval information.

2. *Economic and Financial.*

The last war showed the great importance of economic and financial action, by raising the problems of food supplies and general maintenance for civilian populations. This task should logically have been put in the hands of the Department of National Economics. But almost all the belligerents found the question of supplies to be so grave and so urgent, that it was soon turned over to the "Economic Section" of the German G.H.Q. and to the French General Staff, to mention only those two countries.

3. *Political and Diplomatic.*

Everywhere but in Germany, where an exception was made towards the close of the war, the conduct of diplomatic and political affairs was left to the various divisions of the respective Foreign Offices.

* Certain particulars on the subject are given in the present book, Chapters XIII and XIV.

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When diplomats consent to make the facts known to us, fascinating stories will be written about the successive entry into the war of those nations which were not involved from the start, and also about the evolution of neutrality among the nations which adhered to it until the Peace was concluded.

Perhaps we too shall then have some interesting data to contribute.

4. *Social and Moral.*

The Battle of the Morale is the last field of action for the Secret War. One of the most interesting subjects for study presented by the great secret drama of the World War is certainly found in the physiological and psychical reactions of both combatants and those behind the lines against the shocks of a conflagration lasting fifty-two months, into which all the physical and moral energies of peoples entered.

That was the so-called "*guerre du papier*," a campaign conducted with leaflets, pamphlets, newspapers, etc., which the Germans at first put under the direction of statesmen and diplomats, transferring it later to their G.H.Q.

In France, two distinct services were formed for this purpose, both being dependent on the General Staff: the Morale Section, created and conducted with so much tact and firmness by Marshal Pétain, and the Service for Propaganda on Enemy Territory.

We have now taken a bird's-eye view of the vast battle-field of the Secret War, while making a general survey of its division into specialized organizations which were promptly imposed on all the belligerents by the difficulties as well as the varied characteristics which this new form of warfare presented.

Of all the engagements in which France had to participate, those proper to the Secret War were, in the end, the most favourable to us and at a minimum of expense if not of peril. This was probably for the reason

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that their unexpected character necessitated on our side constant improvisations and immediate decisions.

After briefly demonstrating, as above, the general scheme involved, we must, however, cast just a glance at the technique and the tactics of the Intelligence Service and the Counter-Espionage Service, before studying in action the development of the world-wide secret struggle, an exploration in which the reader will have as guides some remarkable secret agents.

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CHAPTER II

AGENTS AND DOUBLE-AGENTS

PRIOR to the World War, the order of mobilization was supposed to cause all the antennæ of each Intelligence system to converge their waves automatically towards the supreme management of operations. But since there was nothing of the kind in France, or rather since each one of our services had remained in an elementary stage of development, without any *liaison* between them, at the outbreak of hostilities we inevitably suffered from a serious handicap as to both information and counter-espionage.

In Germany, *liaison* was effected quite naturally through the Emperor's Cabinet. In England, it was assured through the co-ordination of the various sections of the wonderful Intelligence Service.

The secret preparation of Germany had been carried very far, with that thorough method and minute attention to detail which characterize all German organizations. We became aware of this only when our initial reverses compelled us to make up for lost time and ground. Our first battalions were massacred in Lorraine because the field had been artfully prepared with concealed machine-guns on every hand, of which we knew nothing.

Similarly, the field for the Secret War had been got ready for action before we suspected there was to be such a thing. This was true especially of the neutral countries, where the German Secret Services had spread traps and pits into which our first agents fell as helpless victims.

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What we then discovered was that while peace still prevailed, Germany had systematically established in all the non-belligerent countries veritable miniature armies, in which civil and military spies mingled with propaganda agents and others whose duty it was to force the economic blockade and to assure the supplies for submarines.

At the head of these invisible troops, the German Embassies and Legations functioned like veritable General Staffs whose activities were extended by those of the Consulates and of the frontier *liaison* posts. From all directions, these various services thus converged to attack our national defence from the rear in its weakest points, all of which had been detected and thoroughly studied.

A German Embassy became in this way a species of Trojan horse introduced into practically every capital in the world, enjoying furthermore diplomatic immunity as well as the convenient principle of extra-territoriality. Round this stronghold raged the central *liaison* agents, recruited at great expense, reduced to submission by bluff or by threats, officered and hemmed in by Germans whose training had been perfected and whose duties had been defined long in advance, so that they should stand ready to act at a moment's notice.

And yet the neutral Governments themselves remained blind, when they did not allow themselves to become accomplices of these dark intrigues !

If one of our agents clumsily unmasked his batteries, because he lacked experience in the difficult arts of espionage and of propaganda, he was forthwith ordered out of the country when he was not thrown into prison. Meanwhile others, broken to this new form of war, did what they pleased and got what they wanted. In order to restore neutrality in Spain, and to recall certain high officials to at least an external observance of impartiality, decisive action was needed such as Marthe Richard improvised.

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To attain this end, she did not lose time and opportunity in troubling herself overmuch with the niceties of diplomatic form and usage, as will be seen presently.

It may indeed be said that, in time of war, prompt decisions put into immediate execution are the only ones which count. Under these conditions, it does not even matter if the decisions themselves are the result of unreasoned impulse.

When the principles of the elementary rights of men, and the conventional precepts solemnly though naïvely edicted at international conferences for controlling belligerents, are hurled to the depths of the abyss, nothing may remain except brute force—or the broomstick of a woman aviator who was furthermore a bit of a witch!

Such was, briefly, the general condition of what may be termed the world battle-field, when France undertook to reconnoitre it, having only the most inadequate means at her disposal.

Joffre was perhaps the only officer in the French Army who instinctively recognized the dangers presented by this state of affairs. For this reason, before proceeding to the front he sent for me and asked me to dig the first trenches of our Domestic Front, so to speak, under the direct orders of Messimy, the Minister of War.

He spoke laconically, but with the precision which always marked his instructions:

"I am leaving you with the General Staff, so that we may not be 'assassinated,' as we were in 1870, by the indiscretions of the Press and by the lynx-like eyes of enemy agents. Consider yourself as a sentinel posted in the night. Manage as best you can. G.H.Q. will help you as far as it is allowed to do so."

In May, 1915, I induced Monsieur Alexandre Millerand, then Minister of War,* to accept the conclusions

* In the Viviani National Defence Cabinet, August 26, 1914, to October, 1915. Later President of the French Republic.

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of a report in which I had set forth the vital necessity for organizing a French Counter-Espionage Service. Having succeeded in this after much insistence, I went to the offices of the Intelligence Service and asked Major B——, then at its head, to tell me what he knew concerning the German secret organizations: things which would not come to the knowledge of the general public.

This seemed necessary for my guidance when engaging in my task.

Major B—— nodded rather sadly, saying:

"See Lieutenant P——, who has something to do with counter-espionage. He will pass on to you whatever he has at his disposal."

Lieutenant P—— had formerly been an inspector of police. He was now attached to the Intelligence Service, as *liaison* with the *Sûreté Gênérale* which, as may be recalled, had alone been responsible for centralizing all information concerning espionage ever since the Dreyfus case.

I called on him immediately and put before him a succinct but forceful statement of my problem.

The only reply which my young colleague made consisted in taking a notebook, worth two sous, out of his safe and handing it to me.

This modest little register contained the names of about a hundred foreigners regarded as suspects, all of whom had naturally disappeared as soon as mobilization was ordered.

That was as much as our General Staff knew about the secret organizations of Germany.

To-day, I have the impression that the public knows very little more, and it is time that some inside facts should be revealed.

Thousands upon thousands of years were needed for certain species of insects to reach a degree of evolution enabling them to plant their poisoned dart at

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the very point which would mean paralysis though not death for an adversary.

Similarly, many centuries had to pass before certain nations succeeded in creating the secret organizations thanks to which they were able to dominate the world for a protracted period. Nor did the world suspect the minute preparation and the deadly might of the invisible blows which were being constantly dealt to them in their most vulnerable parts.

The shadows of the night, which we were so long in detecting, fell all the more deeply about us owing to our position of inferiority in such matters, as compared not only with our adversaries but even with our Allies.

Nevertheless, we succeeded in building up fairly rapidly a new instrument which was both flexible and penetrating: the famous "Fifth Bureau," and not the Second, as it was frequently called. This was effected owing to the work of a few resolute officers, some of whom had specialized on military and naval questions, and others on the study of the new problems presented by the unexpected aspects of economic or financial warfare The close attention given to the matter by Joffre's Cabinet was of great assistance to us in fulfilling our task.

All that remained to be done was to entrust the details to able and determined men, and also to a few of the Frenchwomen whose instinct is so sound and so strong that nothing seeems impossible for them, when their race is threatened and they are left free to advance under the standard of their own genius.

Having said which, let us now follow Marthe Richard, who will be the best of guides for investigating the inner springs of war and casting a clear light on much that had remained lost in the shadows.

The story which follows is not a romance about a mythical woman spy, such as have appeared in any number since the World War. Quite the contrary,

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it is a faithful transcription of facts concerning the adventurous career of a French woman flyer who played an active part in the hostilities.

Like most accurate records of those who were militant in the " Secret War," that of Marthe Richard is noteworthy above all for the strange circumstances which marked her course. The most unusual aspect lies in the fact that she herself created wilfully, though sometimes impulsively and at other times deliberately, many of the situations which she would then develop to the utmost of their possibilities in the interest of the cause she served. But she showed no less adroitness and inventiveness in reversing unfavourable and even dangerously compromising situations, so as to wring from them opportunities leading to brilliant results.

Before the war, Marthe Richard had been an aviator whose exploits were well known in Great Britain and the United States, as well as on the European Continent.

She did not actually use her plane for conducting her campaign. The military authorities had put a veto on a proposal she had made to enlist as an aviator, even if she had to wear a man's clothes. But her undaunted spirit remained consistently that of a skilled and cool-headed flyer. And it may well be said metaphorically that she rode the tempest in the craft of the Intelligence Service.

That metaphor is indeed appropriate for all our secret agents, since in a sense they flew over the enemy's borders. The Secret War had both frontiers and forces of its own, and its soldiers acted constantly under the menace of death. Silent as the birds of the night, they were often brought down within the lines, and when they survived the fire concentrated on them, they were refused the quality of combatants and were executed without mercy.

It happened, alas ! that a few among them, taken by surprise and thoroughly terrorized, surrendered

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unconditionally and passed over, arms and baggage and secrets and all, to the ranks of the enemy's espionage service.

Only the bravest and cleverest among them crossed the lines and effected a landing, while avoiding to attract attention or to arouse suspicion, and so really slipped through the meshes of the counter-espionage nets stretched to catch them. These were the ones who triumphantly reached the objectives which had been assigned to them. And they alone were privileged to return some fine morning, joyfully winging their way while bearing as it were in their beaks the priceless booty of information upon which the gravest issues might depend.

I believe it was some such idea, rather than the simple fact that she was an aviator, which caused Marthe Richard to be inscribed as "*L'Alouette*"—The Skylark—in the secret record-book which bore the real names as well as the pseudonyms of all our agents.

Two dates, and two alone, seem to have been remembered by her, out of all those which marked the singular events of her life. She knew that she had left for Spain in June, 1916, and that she had returned thence for good and all in December, 1917. All other dates she forgot with the ease of the skylark, which takes heed neither for the spots where it has been driven to seek shelter, nor for the faces encountered in the course of its wanderings. Only, the resemblance stopped short at dates. Marthe's recollection of people and places was vivid to an exceptional degree.

For this reason, if for no other, it has seemed advisable to change most names of foreigners, and some other names too, in this story. A few liberties have been taken also with the exact title and position of certain persons in authority.

Scandal and indiscretion have been only too much exploited as a means for publicity in many recent

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books dealing with the war. The story of Marthe Richard will seek to avoid both.

Marthe belongs to the well-known type of secret agent who in our vernacular is called a "double," working for the two adverse parties and remaining perhaps equally enigmatical to them.

Such beings necessarily surround themselves with mystery. They are all alike, however, in that their principal weapons consist in the most wide-awake senses and the most complete self-control. And their services are worth much gold.

Our adversaries would certainly have paid a very high price to prevent our "double" from revealing to us, a few months after launching on her campaign, the secret of their sympathetic ink which was the most difficult of all to detect.

Similarly, they would have given very much to keep her silent when she denounced to us, at the end of December, 1916, their plans for the formidable German submarine offensive in February, 1917. All the powerful means of action which Germany expected to command were then enumerated to us by her.

When it comes to reckoning the services rendered to each side by mysterious secret emissaries of this type, such details as the above go to weigh down the French side of the scale.

But even at the outset, Marthe Richard had reasons far more impelling than the might of gold, to tip the balance in favour of France.

It was in deep mourning that she started off on her mission to Spain. Just two weeks before, her husband, driving a military truck up to the very firing line, had heroically given his life for his country.

His widow was thenceforth to serve in his stead, with passionate and sometimes even mystic ardour.

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CHAPTER III

MARTHE RICHARD

ONE morning in April, 1916, two messages which caused me considerable preoccupation reached me in my offices situated 282, Boulevard St. Germain.

The building, originally intended for apartments, was still so new as scarcely to be completed, but we had taken possession and had installed there, a short time before, some of our services devoted to secret warfare.

Both messages emanated from the same sphere and dealt with one same person, yet singularly enough they reflected diametrically opposed views.

One, sent by Y——, a young aviator, said :

" Beware of Madame Marthe Richard. She is a remarkably intelligent woman. She has been trying to get access to our training camps, and we have not succeeded in discovering what she wants to do there. She speaks German and might very possibly turn out to be a German agent."

A high official in the aviation services, X——, wrote, on the other hand :

" I wish to recommend to you little Madame Richard. I have known her long, because she is the wife of a good friend of mine, now driving a truck at the front. She is very intelligent, but especially she is most astonishingly high-spirited. After moving heaven and earth and doing everything imaginable to organize a free corps of women aviators, and then to secure permission to fly her own machines, she has just applied

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to me for permission to enlist in a man's clothes. And yet she is very much of a woman !

" I think you could make use of her in your services. She speaks German fluently."

There were, I noted, at least two points in common between these contradictory declarations.

Marthe was a woman of brains, and she spoke the language proper to Goethe—or at least to the compatriots of William II.

She seemed to be difficult to understand, since she provoked in her surroundings reactions at the same time so clear and so conflicting. One version revealed enough anxiety to justify a denunciation. But the other showed cool and ponderate confidence such as to prompt a recommendation followed by a suggestion that we engage her in our most secret service.

I unhooked my telephone and called up my friend Priolet, the perspicacious Special Commissioner who to-day is at the head of the *Brigade mondaine** and who was the most remarkable of our French spy-sleuths during the war.

Telling him of the two contradictory messages which had reached me, I asked him to relieve my uncertainty, if he could, by sending me all available facts on the subject of Marthe Richard.

Two days later, I received from the Prefecture of Police a detailed report, the essentials of which I give below from memory.

I would take the opportunity to remark here that I am not so lucky as to be able to include the originals of such documents in this story of the Secret War, as some of my fellow-writers pretend to do. The fact is, that documents of a highly confidential nature have remained in the files of the General Staff, where indeed they belong.

Priolet wrote in substance :

* The special corps of French police who deal with the better class of offenders against morals.

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"Marthe Richard was born in Lorraine, April 15, 1889. Her father, 'Père Louis' as he is familiarly called, was formerly an adjutant in the Hussars. When still very young, she took to sports with passionate ardour. Before going in for aviation, she had had much experience with horse-back riding and driving an automobile; she had even done remarkably well at target-practice, a sport in which few women indulge, winning a second prize at an international competition in Lille.

"She was given her licence as a pilot, No. 1369, June 13, 1913, after an apprenticeship of two months at Villacoublay.

"On August 31, 1913, during an aviation meet in the Morbihan Department, she had a fall which was so serious that certain papers stated next day that she had died of her injuries. This was fortunately untrue. After being for several months unable to pilot her machine, she resumed her flying early in 1914, and in May she succeeded in an attempt to fly from Crotoy to Zurich. She thus won the women's record for distance and duration.

"Following upon this exploit, she engaged, with the aviators Etienne Poulet and Jean Montmain, in exhibitions abroad. Along with the latter of these aviators, she had a second accident at a meet held at Chaux-de-Fond.

"Hostilities broke out a few weeks later.

"She thereupon immediately founded a league called 'The Patriotic Union of Women Aviators,' she being the Secretary General. Writing in its name, she applied twice to the Ministry of War, asking to participate in the national defence as a courier, a *liaison* agent, or a look-out above towns, or else to be used for testing or transporting machines.

"A reporter from *Le Petit Journal* having interviewed her on the subject of her plans, early in June, 1915, she said:

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" ' My comrades and I offer our services to France or to the Allies; it does not matter where, but we want to be made use of. We have risked our lives for sport, therefore the sacrifice we now propose to make is of no consequence. There are only seven of us, but others will follow quickly. Nurses are going on the firing line, why should not women flyers also be sent there? '

" In a letter, a copy of which is appended, General Hirschauer, Director of Military Aeronautics, declined Marthe Richard's offer, while congratulating her on her patriotic devotion.

" Since that period her husband, a wealthy industrialist from Western France, having gone to the front, Marthe Richard lives among her old comrades. No single one, out of all those we have questioned, has expressed the slightest doubts as to her exemplary behaviour and the strictness of her private life.

" Cold and reserved in nature, she does not readily confide in anyone, and never allows anybody to go beyond the limits of the easy manners and the freedom which characterize the rather relaxed life usual in aviation camps.

" If you judge necessary, we can have her movements watched."

Here is the letter from General Hirschauer to which Inspector Priolet referred:

Ministry of War. French Republic.
12820. 4 Paris, June 23, 1915.
12

Madame:

By a letter in date of June 5, you were good enough to suggest that use be made of a few women aviators in the Army Aviation.

I wish to pay a tribute to the elevated sentiments and the fine patriotic devotion which have animated you, but to my great regret it is impossible for me to accept this generous offer.

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If the laws and usages of war, as established by the Hague Conventions, abstain from mentioning women fighters, the uncertainty which prevails as to the rights of people in this respect would not seem to permit of an assertion to the effect that women aviators would be considered as "belligerents" and entitled consequently to treatment as such.

Pray believe me, etc.,
HIRSCHAUER.

In view of the character now given to her, I could not but write and ask Marthe to call on me. I did so through her protector in the Army Aviation, so as not to arouse her suspicions unnecessarily.

A few days later, the mysterious woman entered my office, where within a few months the most famous of all German woman spies, Mata-Hari, was to come with bowed head.

How different were those two beings!

Some day I shall tell also the story of the life and the execution of Mata-Hari*, putting an end to certain current legends by giving exact details as to the conditions under which I myself ordered her arrest. It was with great regret that I saw her sent before the firing squad, because her life would doubtless have been more useful to us than her tragic end, even though the latter might have been justified, as some seemed to hope, by the exemplary fortitude with which she faced it.

There was but one trait in common between the two women: their scorn for money and the disinterested devotion with which each of them served a cause.

With Marthe Richard, it was the cause of France.

With Mata-Hari, it was the cause of Germany,

* See "Memoirs of a Spy-Hunter."

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where she had been adulated and treated like a queen, so that, whether from gratitude or from arrogance, she had made of it her adoptive country.

As concerned, however, the intelligence with which they played their respective parts, as well as their manner of staging details, we should bear in mind that they were as different as a highly pedigreed French race-horse and a Dutch half-breed. Several classes intervened between them, as would be said in the language of the track.

I was able to observe Marthe at leisure, during the war. A few months ago I saw her again, outwardly calm, at least, under the blow of her second widowhood, subsequent to her marriage with a wealthy Englishman. My impression of her character remained then what it had been on that afternoon at the beginning of May, 1916, the point which we have now reached.

Marthe's dominating quality, which had already been proved by her shooting and aviation records, was complete control of her reflexes, to the extent that she appeared to have no nervous and circulatory systems. In all circumstances, she remained imperturbably, phenomenally calm.

During a conversation she would often listen, or seem to listen, without replying, nor would she put questions. A conversation with her might therefore be a series of alternate soliloquies, in which each party took a turn at making a statement. The most singular feature of it was that at the end, the two interlocutors might find they had reached complete understanding.

I furthermore learned that Marthe never followed a system of reasoning. She invariably got ahead of it. Your opinion would then be a matter of indifference to her, because she would have reached it before you could set it forth, unless she had already adopted the contrary attitude. But she would not impose her own views any more than she would accept yours.

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If she was never taken off her guard, it was, I believe, because she considered life as being filled with unexpected happenings.

On one occasion which I recall, she very nearly lost her life prematurely at an aviation meet. The organizers had failed to warn her that the flying field was cut in two by a big ditch, which promptly brought her machine to grief.

" Ditches are made to capsize in," was all she said, as she got up after her spill.

It will readily be understood that a first interview with such a person is very difficult to conduct. Marthe was to drive this fact home to me, without loss of time.

" I asked you to call, madame," I began, " because our friend X—— spoke highly of you and mentioned your great desire to serve our country by all possible means."

I laid particular stress on the last words, expecting them to prepare an easy transition for what should follow. But I had wasted my efforts, for Marthe nipped in with :

" Do you want to enlist me in your Intelligence Service ? "

" Not at all," I replied sharply. " I am not in the Intelligence Service, my Division deals exclusively with counter-espionage."

Silence.

" It would furthermore be less dangerous for you," I continued.

Silence.

" Oh ! I am fully informed about your brilliant work as a flyer, and I know you are not afraid of anything."

Silence.

" Will you allow me to ask you a question ? Do you believe there are many spies in France ? "

I was not yet accustomed to this silent habit of hers, and being slightly irritated by her mutism, I had

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purposely put my last question in a rather high-pitched tone, to show that I must have an answer.

What I secured was this:

"I have no planes left, and no car. My husband has gone off to the front. I'm bored."

With a weary and nonchalant gesture, just as a young panther in its cage may stretch out a paw to drive away a troublesome fly, Marthe took out her vanity bag and started to put on some powder.

I decided that I had better come straight to the point.

"Are you aware, madame, that precisely because you don't seem to know what to do with yourself, some of your comrades have been wondering what you are after, when you go to their aviation camp?"

"I knew that. Little Y—— must have denounced me. They are a band of young lunatics, delightful every one of them. Death is waiting for them all, each morning as they take flight, and they want to enjoy life as quickly as they can. But I loathe their stupid excesses, and that is why they have nicknamed me a 'dead leaf,' possibly because I take so long to drop from the sky into their arms."

She stopped, and this time I allowed silence to fall. It was she who broke it:

"You have never flown, have you, Captain? I will give you your baptism of air whenever you wish. You will be able to understand only then. A woman's first flight is like her first love, she never forgets it."

Once more a pause, which again I was careful not to interrupt. She resumed:

"Is the novelty of the sensation responsible? Possibly. But I believe it is rather the persistence of a sensation to which nothing else can be compared. The nerves are stretched taut until they are ready to break. One yearns to impose one's will on an element which remains for ever elusive. One fails in the effort, of course, and then one is like a child trying

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to articulate a word which positively refuses to come out. It is as though instinct, being stronger than reason, hated a first avowal, a first falsehood, on the very border of the soul itself——

"You consider me an awful liar, like most women, don't you? Well! If I passionately love flying, it is because that is perhaps the only thing in the world which keeps its promise: Liberty or Death."

As she ceased, Marthe applied to her tightly-sealed lips the red stick which she had taken out, after putting the powder-puff neatly back in her bag.

I said to myself:

"X—— and Y—— were both right. She is a woman of strong character. What services she could render us if she wished! After all, it is best to put the question to her plainly. We shall then see."

Aloud, I said:

"I ask no better than to give you a trial in the Counter-Espionage Service. But you must already have made some observations in the circles which you frequent: aviation, theatres, night-haunts, newspaper offices, and I don't know where besides."

"Oh! You may have been told I occasionally see that unfortunate madman, Almereyda.* I have wondered, very much as you have done, where the money comes from. But I have no way to solve the problem. On the other hand, I have ideas as to your service."

I was all attention, and would not have wished to speak even if she had not continued without so much as stopping to breathe:

"You may reply that this is none of my business.

* Editor of the Paris paper *Le Bonnet Rouge*, proved to have received subsidies of German gold. Arrested after Captain Ladoux had ordered a cheque of German origin to be seized on the person of his associate Duval, at the Swiss frontier, Almereyda was imprisoned at Fresnes but prior to his trial was found dead, on the morning of August 14, 1917, strangled with a bootlace in his bed at the prison infirmary. Duval was condemned and shot.

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But if I were in your place, I should not look for spies in France. You might as well seek for the needle in the haystack. But the needle has a thread to it which extends beyond the hay and connects with the enemy espionage system somewhere. So I should seek the other end of the thread outside of the hay, that is to say, either at the frontier where all communications pass, or in directly neutral countries whither the clues lead."

In a few sentences, she had summed up the entire programme on which I had been labouring for a year. It was, stated briefly, the history of my service which had begun with telegraphic and postal censorship and the search for sympathetic inks and secret codes, so that we had detected the principal means of communication used. We were now able to begin sending agents abroad for purposes of observation in all neutral countries, but as yet the process had been entirely too slow to suit my taste.

Furthermore, it was the first time that anybody had spoken to me with concern about the editor of the *Bonnet Rouge*, who had been reported to the police as a suspect but against whom nothing of a positively compromising character had been noted. Indeed, Almereyda might still be alive to-day, but for the perspicacity of a ticket collector at Bellegarde, and the lucky chance which caused me to be on the spot at the time, so that we picked up the clue.

Swift as had been the course of my thoughts, Marthe had got ahead of me and knew that I was going to employ her.

"Will you allow me a leeway of a few days?" she asked, taking the situation for granted. "I shall come back to see you. Not here, if you don't mind. This spy-nest of yours, situated just across the way from the Chamber of Deputies and the Ministry of War, is rather too conspicuous for those whose duties compel them to come to it."

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" Don't worry, we have other places," I answered, surprised by her remark while still standing on my guard. " I shall indicate to you a more discreet meeting-place, when you agree to join us."

" In a couple of weeks, perhaps," said Marthe, already on her feet and prepared to leave.

Accompanying her as far as the door, I do not know why I recalled a remark made by the Père Joffre when reviewing a squad of Reserve officers at Amiens, whose training he had entrusted to me :

" Don't put too many ideas into their heads, Captain. The best school for war is war itself. It cannot be waged with theories. It is fought with men."

My old chief was right, I reflected, as Marthe held out her hand to me and I raised the tips of her fingers to my lips. Joffre's favourite axiom was applicable to the Secret War also. Espionage was conducted not with principles but with spies.

" What a spy Marthe will make for those who use her first ! " I thought. " Provided only that others have not yet begun ! "

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CHAPTER IV

THE SKYLARK JOINS UP

IT cannot be said that any particular consideration was shown to me, at the period of my own trial.* But no one, even among my most intimate friends, has ever suggested that I uttered a single complaint or expressed any indignation at the extent of human cowardice and injustice to which I found myself exposed.

When I accepted the position of Chief of the Counter-Espionage Service, I knew that I was running great risks if I wished to do my duty to the end. For France never shows any hesitation about leaving to their fate the chiefs of her public services, at the very first evidence of public discontent against their conduct in office.

So I was not altogether surprised when, on an icy day in January, 1919, I found myself locked up in the same cell of the Cherche-Midi Prison in Paris which had served successively for the incarceration of Colonel Henry and of Colonel Picard, later a general and Minister of War.

Nevertheless, among the vehement reproaches uttered against me when I underwent that disagreeable experience, there was at least one about which I remain somewhat sensitive even to-day. It concerned my method of employing double-agents.

* Captain Ladoux was arrested on the strength of charges subsequently recognized to be unfounded. Tried by court martial, he was acquitted after high tributes had been paid to his services and his patriotism. See Biographical Preface.

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I should like to know what others would have done in my place.

Of course, it had struck me, at the very beginning of my apprenticeship, that the double-agent was the most dangerous of all the weapons available for purposes of secret warfare. It might prove to be even more dangerous than the instruments which our enemies were forging for direct use against us.

But had I any choice as to means?

I have already explained that at the General Staff we had known nothing of the principles and method of the German espionage system. We had accordingly been compelled to forge, in the very thick of a battle with treason, a weapon which could serve its purpose only if we began by recognizing all the difficulties of the task to which it must be applied.

When on August 1, 1914, Germany suddenly closed her frontiers hermetically, we had not a single French agent within her borders, whereas she had left in our midst some hundreds of German agents whom we had no means of identifying.

It must be recognized that our mobilization plan provided for an embryonic protective system, by establishing telegraphic censorship. But purely negative instructions were given to this service, whose object was to stop all texts transmitted "in clear" with information whose nature, it was judged, would be prejudicial to the national defence if made public. No indications whatever were given to help in detecting "suspect" telegrams, for the excellent reason that there was no basis on which we could proceed at that time.

Furthermore, postal censorship did not exist, and more than a year was needed before it could be put into effect. This delay was attributable to protests from neutral countries, which found it inconvenient to have their mail opened or even so much as delayed.

After the postal censorship was organized, another

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problem arose. We knew nothing about the German sympathetic inks or the methods for revealing them. If our British friends had not taught us that iodine vapour allowed a few kinds of ink, and those only of the simplest, to be detected, perhaps we should still be looking for the texts concealed between lines of writing.

Finally, our frontiers were as full of holes as a sieve. Anybody and everything could pass at pleasure.

I therefore believe that, by doing what I could and employing double-agents, I applied the strict military doctrine, which points out the duty of any troop commander and compels him, in the absence of all information, to attack on some point of the front in order to see what lies behind.

Now, all the frontiers of France were the veritable front of the Secret War. The curtain there had to be lifted with prudence so as not to create, especially among the neutral neighbours of our adversaries, a state of irritation which would have risked forfeiting neutral sympathy for us. This was all the truer since the proximity of these countries to the enemy caused them to be deeply impressed by the delusion of Germany's supreme power and the direct threat of being subjected to it.

For a war of the kind, which consisted in crossing our neighbours' fields in pursuit of the big game flocking over from the German frontiers, tact and initiative were equally necessary. But most of all, sleuths with a highly trained power of scent were wanted for finding the trail.

Marthe Richard's turned-up nose and her sure instinct caused me to believe at once that she could play such a part.

But first of all I must make sure that she was still free of all obligations in other directions, and that she would not drop me without warning, as a brilliant

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young actress of the Théâtre Français might do, if a bigger price were offered to her on a foreign stage.

What, indeed, could I do for Marthe financially? Our Secret Funds, amounting to 60,000 francs per year at the outset of the war, had with difficulty been increased to one million in January, 1916.

There remained only that essentially French invention, the System D,* which need not even be patented because the qualities required for applying it are difficult to imitate. Besides, patents run out sooner or later, and in France we always allow them to lapse as soon as they cease to be indispensable to us.

Marthe was a consummate product of System D.

Early in June, she rang me up and informed me that she wished to call. I then made the second appointment for her.

This time I had chosen a discreet place which trustworthy and charitable friends had put at the disposal of our impecunious service. A variety of quarters and settings were thus available, according to the quality of our recruits.

I received Marthe in the rue Jacob. To my great surprise, she wore deep mourning.

"I have just lost my husband," she began by saying. "He was killed at the head of a column he was conducting to the *cote* 180, near Menancourt. I thought of asking you for a pass to go and seek his body. But he remains alive in my heart, where he may know me better than he did during his lifetime. I was sometimes cross to him, and I must avenge him. Do whatever you will with me, I now have an aim in the war. The Germans shall pay."

I tried to read her deepest thoughts. It was labour lost. She had the same air of nonchalance as during our first interview. I knew that she loved her husband

* "*Débrouille,*" a familiar term which in its application to ingeniously improvised solutions during the World War amounted to "Manage in any way you can, but *do* it."

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as she must have known how to love. For her, love was a contest like any other sport. At all events, she had just experienced the trial by fire. I must either consider this as being conclusive, or must renounce using Marthe. I decided to use her.

After a few words of sympathy, I said:

"Well! We shall work together. I dare not ask you whether, in the hours of grief through which you have just passed, you observed anything of interest to our service?"

"Nothing," she answered. "My husband's death occurred two days after our conversation, and I did not leave the house again. Besides, there's nothing I can do in those surroundings. What would be the use of questioning the connexions of the men with whom I am acquainted? They know nothing, or would say nothing. Send me abroad—to Switzerland or to Holland."

"I was about to suggest Spain."

"As you please, only I don't speak Spanish."

"It is not absolutely needful, for I shall ask you to make contact only with Germans. I have not yet been able to get access to their Spanish services. I merely know through our Embassy that they are particularly active and that the centre of their Propaganda and Espionage organization is in Madrid itself. That is where I should like you to go. But you must pretend neither to speak nor to understand the German language."

"But how can I manage to get engaged by them?"

"Have no fears. A young, pretty, idle, and well-dressed Frenchwoman will seem an easy prey to their beaters. Just leave them free to act, and within a month I am sure they will have singled you out."

For a brief instant I was fully conscious of the cruelty involved in a task such as mine, since I had to ask this woman, on whose cheeks the tears had not

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yet dried, to try to fascinate the very people responsible for her husband's death.

She herself once again came to my assistance by asking:

"Shall I proceed directly to Madrid?"

"No," I answered, "you would find nobody there. At the beginning of July the entire Court goes to San Sebastian, remaining there until October. All the Embassies follow. In the full flush of the gay season etiquette is relaxed, it is easier to meet people, and connexions can be established without loss of time. Also, you will find it far easier to attract attention. I shall have somebody on the spot to advise you."

She interrupted me:

"I need nobody. It is of utmost interest to my mission for me to be alone, at least to begin with. It may take longer, but it will be safer. All I ask is for you to provide me with means for communicating with you."

"You will have a secret address for me, and as a further precaution I shall give you a formula for sympathetic ink which you can develop yourself, in case I have occasion to write directly to you. My letters will be taken to your hotel by one of my officers. You need fear no indiscretion."

"All right, give me the formula."

"An ordinary cachet of aspirin dissolved in half a glass of water. To develop the writing, press the paper with your electric iron."

"I understand. I shall buy a cachet at once, not to write to you but because I have a raging headache."

"Would you prefer to return to-morrow, if you are too tired? You might retain my instructions rather better."

"What you have already told me is amply sufficient."

"But you must have a passport."

"I have thought of that. Here are two photographs I had taken yesterday for the purpose. Have

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my passport made out, and have it left for me at my house to-morrow morning. I shall leave in the evening for San Sebastian. There must be a train from the Quai d'Orsay at 7 p.m."

" You don't intend to go away without money ? "

" Give me whatever you please."

" But I have nothing on me, beyond what may be in this pocket-book," I explained.

I found, on investigation, that I had eight hundred francs, representing about one-fourth of the entire sum at the disposal of my service for the rest of the month.

I hesitated before offering this to her, knowing how expensive living was at the Spanish seaside resort.

She took the money from my hands, however, with a kindly look not bereft of compassion, I think, for this modest viaticum. Then, with the first smile I had seen on her lips since the opening of this difficult conversation, she rose, her fearless eyes already fixed on the distant horizon towards which she was to soar, as it must have appeared to her from the seat in her plane when the propeller was whirling at the rate of two thousand revolutions.

Impassive and yet all ablaze, entirely sure of herself, the Skylark was taking flight. She had not so much as glanced behind her, at the vague front of the perfidious and merciless Secret War, where all the sentiments in the human scale clashed desperately, from the vilest treason against one's entire race to the sublime sacrifice of life in a death void of glory.

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CHAPTER V

HALPHAN THE BEATER

FROM the advent of the first dog-days in July, until the approach of the shortening and already chilly October evenings, San Sebastian was the centre of fashionable life under the last of the Spanish kings. Madrid society would then wander languorously along the voluptuous Concha, scented with tamarisks and mimosas, and glowing firm and smooth as the throat of an Andalusian woman, with Mounts Urgull and Igueldo, just beyond, suggesting the splendid outline of her bosom. And there court would be paid to the gallant sovereign, as well as to whoever had been elected by him as queen of the season.

San Sebastian suggested, in those times, a modernized Versailles transported to a Spanish Deauville where Carmen, in gala array, sang each night for the King or his courtiers, among the forgotten by-paths of the Basque mountains.

In July, 1916, however, the World War had extended the limits of the local stage. Even the area of fine sand reserved for the royal tents at the *Perla del Oceano*, the most exclusive of the bathing establishments, was unable to withstand the pressure of the strange throng speaking a hundred languages, which the storm in Central Europe had driven in alarm to this little corner of the earth. San Sebastian had thus become a species of shrine, to which many of those affected by the prevailing unrest came as it were on a pilgrimage.

It was also one of the chief of the neutral capitals.

The evolution of neutrality during the World War would supply an attractive, if not always edifying, subject for historical study. Many small nations,

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which neither their will nor the course of events brought into the struggle, sought out the stream of blood flowing from the veins of wounded Europe, expecting to find there a modern Pactolus rich in particles of gold.

The ways in which neutrals could earn money at that period were many and varied.

A story was told of a certain Spanish grandee whose dress had recalled the patched accoutrements of Don Quixote, in days when he had stood at the windows of his ruined mansion in the Avenida, enviously watching the wealthy throng on their way to play baccara; but who now drove each morning in his own swift motor-car to inspect his mines or factories at Bilbao. His case might be considered as typical.

But when the habit of trading with the enemy had been acquired, the temptation was great to engage in more dangerous but also more profitable business, dependent on the German Secret Funds. For this reason, San Sebastian, the fashionable capital and the favourite sojourning-place of big war profiteers, was furthermore from the start an active centre for spies.

Marthe Richard crossed the frontier on a July evening when the cigar-girls at Irun, with pinks stuck over their ears and love-songs on their lips, were calling to their Basque cousins beyond the Bidassoa to desert in order to join them.

Marthe, dressed in a dark tailored suit and with her little pet *loulou** tucked under her arm, did not seem conscious of the equivocal atmosphere into which she was penetrating.

In novels dealing with espionage, the heroine has no sooner arrived in the town to which she is sent on a mission, than she immediately singles out the man upon whom she is destined to exercise her wiles. Then, swift as a flash, she makes wax impressions of the lock on the door of the room he occupies. She forthwith lays hands on the secret papers which will lead

* Pomeranian.

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to the detection of the enemy agents, her motor is waiting at the gate or her aeroplane on the roof of the hotel, and she promptly takes flight in the very face of her disconcerted lover, who sees no alternative left but suicide.

Marthe will probably never claim a place in the gallery of such romantic heroines to whom everything comes as by enchantment. For, having reached her destination at the very height of the festive season, although she was not seeking amusement and was charged only with the duty of listening in a country whose language she did not understand, she took more than a month to get her bearings.

" Where must I start, in order to grasp the famous clue ? " she asked herself the day after her arrival.

She had put up in princely style at the Continental, in the very midst of the cosmopolitan throng and the idle bathers who sought to dispel their boredom on the beach, or at baccara, or in the restaurants at night. As total fortune, she had in her bag the eight hundred francs with which I had provided her.

A week later, all she had accomplished had been to exchange a few words with a very elegant Frenchman, whom she soon identified as a deserter from our army and whom she suspected of being a German recruiting agent. She had guessed right, for later he was condemned to death by default.

But Marthe was Bergsonian in her own way. The only truth for her did not consist in the sensations she herself might feel as a consequence of her immediate perceptions. She knew how to control her nerves when time passed too slowly to suit her, because experience had taught her the time-honoured lesson that things come to those who wait. Those who have not only absorbed but succeeded in applying this have fulfilled the first essential condition for genius.

So she waited calmly, indifferent to the gallant overtures of *caballeros* attracted like flies by the direct and penetrating glance of her blue eyes—the look

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which characterizes airmen and seamen—as she strolled idly along the sun-bathed terrace by the sea, her little dog trotting in her wake.

Her meditations ran somewhat as follows :

" The captain is rather too clever. He fancies I need only let my line drift with the stream, and the fish will at once come and get hooked. I'd like to see him try ! If I had my plane, or even a car, I might put up some sort of appearance, for the newly-rich are alike the world over, regardless of latitude and longitude. The picture matters little to them, as long as it has a golden frame."

The uninteresting letters which she sent me did not reflect discouragement so much as a sort of annoyance and embarrassment at seeming to be a failure. She informed me that, spending at the rate of one hundred and fifty pesetas per day, the viaticum with which I had supplied her was exhausted long since.

I was about to go to her assistance, in spite of the protests she had made against the very thought of having anybody with her, when I received, early in August, a short note written in sympathetic ink, which made me emit a big sigh of relief.

" I have made contact. I believe things will now get going," Marthe announced laconically.

Her patience was indeed about to be rewarded, and she was to get full opportunity to exercise her inborn art for turning to utmost advantage even the most unpromising situations.

Seated alone one day at a table in the Café du Rhin, which she had chosen as a look-out because it was much frequented, or perhaps merely because of its name, she overheard a rather sharp argument between two customers immediately behind her and whose faces she could not see. They were speaking German.

" I bet she's French ! " one said.

" A hundred marks that she's a Spaniard ! " retorted the other.

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Great as was her self-control in ordinary circumstances, Marthe's joy at finding someone with whom she could deal, after all this waiting, very nearly led her to turn round. But the most important of all the instructions I had given her, and the one which was to prove most valuable to her, had been that she must pretend to know not a single word of German. And so, instead of staring at the two men, she recovered her self-possession and suddenly thrust back her chair, as if to avoid the sun which had invaded her table.

In so doing, she clumsily overthrew the cocktail glasses of her two neighbours.

"Oh! I beg your pardon!" she cried out in confusion, flushing very pink, and reflecting inwardly: "The glasses are white, that brings good luck."

The pretext which both parties had sought, though for different reasons, was now turned to account by Marthe on the one hand and the two men on the other. The conversation began immediately in French, Marthe having hastened to allege that she spoke no other tongue.

"You are a Parisian; I have won a hundred marks!" the first of the Germans exclaimed gleefully.

"I? Not at all!" Marthe protested. "I was married in France, but my father was a Swiss and my mother a Turk."

To herself she commented:

"If that doesn't make me enough of a neutral to suit them, I don't know what they can expect."

"Are you a widow, then?" asked the winner of the bet.

"Yes," she assented, "my husband was killed in an automobile accident a few months ago. And who are you?"

The two men bowed, and gave their names.

"Dr. Wilhelm Kraut, a German physician," said the first.

"Heinrich Halphan, a German engineer," said the second, adding awkwardly, "Are you not afraid to deal with two *Boches*, madame?"

"Oh, I'm afraid only of cowards," she answered.

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"All the men I see here, while their brothers are fighting, fill me with disgust. I take them to be deserters, every one of them."

The two men were now compelled to vindicate themselves. The winner of the second prize in the old shooting-contest at Lille had here hit the bull's-eye at the first shot.

"You are entirely right," Kraut returned promptly. "If you see me at San Sebastian, it's because I have just landed from the Cameroon. As a former physician to His Majesty, I was appointed in 1912 Director of the Sanitary Service of our great colony."

As he said this, the doctor puffed a large Havana, leering at his neighbour and enjoying in advance the reply which the other would now be compelled to make.

"And I," said Halphan after a moment's hesitation, "came to Spain on an industrial mission. I am watching for a good chance to return to Germany without being caught by the British cruisers."

"What about your submarines?" Marthe demanded. "Don't they carry any passengers?"

"But, madame, our submarines never touch at the Spanish coast."

"Just don't they!" Marthe jeered. "It's not a week since all the French papers were talking about the one which came to get supplies at Bilbao."

"That is a complete falsehood," Halphan protested. "I can prove it, because I was in Bilbao at the time, having gone there on business. Nobody in the port saw a submarine."

"I said that only to tease you," Marthe laughed. "Whatever the means employed, and whoever is to win, all that I wish is for this horrible war to be over as soon as possible. But why are you silent?" she asked suddenly, turning towards Kraut.

"I'm hungry, that is why," Kraut answered. "It seems to me that with the hundred marks I have just lost to my friend Halphan, we could have an excellent lunch."

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"Not to-day, I'm engaged," Halphan returned. "But to-morrow, if you will, I shall be at the disposal of Madame."

With which the engineer rose to take his leave.

No sooner had he done so, than Kraut leaned over towards the charming woman and murmured in her ear, whether on an impulse of sincerity or for the deliberate purpose of winning her confidence:

"You did right to speak to Halphan as you did. He is not the sort of man you ought to associate with."

"Why not?"

"He does dirty work."

"He's not engaged in the White Slave traffic for the Argentine, I hope!" Marthe exclaimed.

"Worse. It is he who provides supplies for our submarines. And, far graver still—I ought not to tell you this—Heinrich is a spy."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Marthe.

But she was furious with herself, reflecting:

"I'm out of luck. I staked on the wrong horse. But all the same, let us see where this particular horse will lead me."

A few moments later, the doctor hailed a cab and drove Marthe to Zaldivar, the charming little watering-place in the suburbs of San Sebastian.

The afternoon proved to be a disappointment for them both. Kraut, a prey to self-reproach for having talked too much, seemed to avoid all questions put to him by his companion, whereas Marthe was kept busy repulsing the impetuous advances of the colonial doctor.

Neither had been successful, when they drove back to San Sebastian in the gentle twilight whipped by a sharp little breeze from the Atlantic. Passing through the Avenida del Kursaal and the flowered parterres of the Alderdi-Eder, they reached the town to find it still half asleep under the stifling heat of the afternoon, before rousing to its gay and noisy night-life, favourable

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to such evil traps as the smooth and mysterious Halphan might stretch under cover of the darkness.

Kraut drove his pretty companion as far as the door of the Continental.

"I hope I shall see you to-morrow, at the Café du Rhin?" he said.

"Certainly, but not before noon," she answered with her most bewildering smile.

Next day at eleven o'clock sharp she was at the bar of the Café du Rhin. Her instinct had guided her wisely, for she found Halphan waiting there.

He seemed anxious to know the outcome of the excursion the previous day. Perhaps he especially hoped to learn the nature of the confidences which Kraut might have been led to make. Marthe therefore quickly reassured him.

"Your friend is charming, but he is as insufferable as all those Frenchmen," she said. "They can't see a woman without making love to her. You aren't like that, are you, Monsieur Heinrich?"

"No," replied Halphan, who to Marthe's surprise seemed to be far less assiduous than he had been the previous day. "I am first of all a business man. I adore being in the company of women, but it's because they bring me the only pleasant relief I experience in the endless hard labour of my occupations."

"What do you manufacture?" Marthe asked innocently.

"Anything and everything, in an effort to earn money."

"Teach me your trade! I see everybody about me getting rich, while I can't manage to make anything. I shall even be compelled to return to France, because I am penniless," she added in a confidential and slightly embarrassed tone.

"And yet you put up at the Continental?"

"Of course. I hoped to pick up a husband. In France, there are none left, there are only lovers."

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" What is your daily bill at the hotel ? "

" One hundred and fifty pesetas."

" What if you were offered twice that amount ? "

" I should accept at once, on the strict understanding that whoever made the offer had no ulterior motives like Kraut."

" Kraut is a brute. He is for ever talking of his efforts to return to Germany. The plain truth is that he has had the opportunity ten times over. If he hasn't gone, it's for the same reason as all the other men you have noticed: he's afraid. Besides, there are so many ways in which one can serve one's country, even abroad—— But here he comes. Let's talk of something else. He mustn't suspect what we have been saying. Are you free to-morrow ? "

" All day, unless it is for the purpose of renewing that little sentimental excursion to Zaldivar."

" Neither of us has any time to waste over such trifles. You appear to be an intelligent and energetic woman. You have only to say the word, and your fortune is as good as made. All you need do is to trust me. I am going to Bilbao to-morrow by the ten o'clock train. Meet me at the station at leaving-time. Your ticket will be bought and ready for you. We shall talk on the way."

He then greeted Kraut :

" Good morning, dear old Wilhelm. Madame was just telling me what a delightful time she had on her excursion yesterday. I am host to-day, I invite you both to lunch with me at the Casino, although I did not lose my bet."

" What, madame is really not French ? "

" Not at all ; she is only a very superior woman."

To herself Marthe commented silently :

" Yes, my dear Heinrich. I shall prove it to you. But you will have to pay the piper ! "

Whereupon she slipped her dog's leash over Wilhelm's arm, and Wilhelm was evidently flattered.

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CHAPTER VI

THE MAN WITH THE DARK GLASSES

THE journey from San Sebastian to Bilbao is one of the most picturesque in Spain. The track follows first the Bay of Viscaya, spanning abrupt ravines fragrant with the scent of wild lemon trees and pink with the flush of flowering heather, before ascending to the higher levels of Guipuzcoa and crossing its sierras through an almost uninterrupted succession of tunnels.

"There are forty of these tunnels on the way to Bilbao," Halphan informed Marthe.

He was seated opposite to her in a huge Spanish *butaca*, or combined arm-chair and folding bed, one of which he had provided for her as well as one for himself, on this day journey, so that he might make a comfortable and leisurely survey of his future recruit.

"I hope," he added, "that you won't be frightened by the darkness and the noise?"

"You forget that I have a protector," Marthe answered, putting her inseparable dog in her lap.

"What do you call him?"

"*Flot.*"

The French pronunciation, with the final "t" unsounded, misled him.

"Why," he exclaimed, "*Floh* is the German for flea!"

The dog, as a matter of fact, had been named Flot because his mistress had picked him up as a stray by the seaside, and so she had associated him in thought with the waves.

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But Marthe feared lest this *tête-à-tête* change into a formal inquiry lasting two hours and a half, if she began by expatiating upon the significance attached to the French word she had adopted. With her surprising facility for seizing on any pretext, however unlikely it might be, she took the cue he offered. Allowing herself to fall into a reverie, she murmured at the end of a moment or two :

" Yes. One of your compatriots gave me the dog."

" So you had a German friend ? "

" Yes. A very great friend." She paused. " I knew him at San Moritz, shortly before the war." Again a pause. " I suppose he also must have disappeared."

" I can soon find out for you," Halphan exclaimed quickly, happy to see an opportunity for securing references about Marthe's former life and her general sentiments. " Can you tell me his name ? "

" It's impossible," she replied with a weary gesture, as if seeking to ward off painful memories. " He was too closely connected with the Imperial Family."

The thrust went home. Halphan stiffened as if prepared to make a military salute. Thenceforth it was with utmost respect that he addressed this French-woman who had been distinguished by the attentions of a German of Royal blood.

Noting which, Marthe commented inwardly :

" Now I am rid of him, at least in the tunnels."

Then she deftly drifted to other subjects, and presently set out to keep the conversation running for as long as possible in a vein of gentle persiflage which rendered impossible further questions from her companion.

They travelled on as far as Deva, where the track leaves the Cantabrian *corniche* and the sea on the right, while it continues on its way inland.

Halphan, thoroughly impressed and even awed, by this time, did not know how to extract necessary

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confidences from his companion. He was perfectly aware that a good beater is bound to submit a complete report concerning his recruits, somewhat on the lines of the "*fiche militaire*" of newly incorporated soldiers.

But an airwoman cannot be caught in a net like a butterfly. Marthe, who had already broken several feminine records, was capable of breaking the most difficult of all, the record for silence.

She accordingly dropped attempts at conversation, and remained resolutely mute.

Nevertheless, since on her side she also wished to gather some information, she resolved, after a while, to allow her examining magistrate to reopen his inquiry. It might go at least as far as she herself found convenient. To this end, she turned to advantage a trifling episode which occurred.

The train, broken-winded like most Spanish trains, had stopped for a moment to recover its breath at Eibar. This is one of the most renowned towns in Spain for the temper and fineness of its steel; it rather suggests St. Etienne on a small scale.

On the platform, an itinerant vendor offered for sale to the travellers a varied assortment of richly damascened daggers. Halphan very thoughtfully suggested making a present of one to his companion.

"You are not superstitious, at all events," Marthe said, accepting the gift. "You know, in France, they pretend a knife cuts friendship."

"I don't believe it, and my first impressions are never wrong. We shall become very good friends. But all the same," he added, grasping her hand as the train started, "you must have confidence in me."

"You must first of all deserve my confidence," Marthe replied.

"I'm ready to do anything to please you. What do you want?" he asked.

"I want you to bring me a great deal of money"

"I am able to put a fortune at your feet."

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" Are you then so very rich ? "

" Personally, no. But Germany gives magnificent rewards to those who agree to serve her."

Marthe thought :

" Here we are at last ! I shall now know where I stand."

With her most naïve air, she remarked :

" I don't see how I can be of use to your country."

" Come now," Halphan retorted with a new harshness in his tone, " you are too intelligent to have failed to understand long before this."

" And you are too much of a blunderer for me to listen to you any more," was Marthe's reply. " My dear Heinrich, you are not a good recruiting agent. Even if I had been less intelligent than you are good enough to believe, any other woman in my place would have understood, at our very first meeting, just what your profession was and the sort of business you intended to propose to me : supplying submarines, or perhaps espionage in France. That's it, isn't it ? There's no possible mistake about the goods in question."

" Exactly," Halphan acquiesced, furious at having allowed her to speak first.

" Very good. Now we can talk plainly. You know the end of the road which you are proposing to me ? "

" Yes. A fortune."

" No, the execution post at Vincennes. Some of your agents have already been dragged there. But it is quite true that I love money and want to earn a lot very quickly. More money than you think, and certainly much more than you can offer me in the somewhat subordinate capacity—excuse me for saying so—which you appear to occupy."

" I have only one chief after the Emperor," Halphan replied proudly.

Marthe, who was now beginning to understand the

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hierarchy of the German Intelligence Service in Spain, said :

" That's excellent, it greatly simplifies matters. There is then only one more person I need know, in order to be able to dictate my conditions."

" ' Dictate ' ! " Heinrich protested. " You can't impose conditions on Commander——"

He stopped short, just before revealing the name of his chief.

Taking note of which, Marthe said to herself :

" I'll get the name next time, with luck."

Aloud, she resumed :

" Anyhow, the Commander is the man who pays. So he is the only one with whom I am willing to deal. If I am to risk my neck for your employer, while he stays at a prudent distance from the bullets, the risk is worth at least cool discussion between the two parties chiefly concerned. You must admit that. And so, my dear Heinrich, I must see your chief and nobody but your chief. Take it or leave it."

As Halphan was about to launch forth in an argument on the elementary duties of a recruiting agent towards his superior, he was annoyed to see Marthe quietly draw Flot closer to her, pull the curtain over the window, and settle down in her corner, preparing for the traditional midday *siesta*.

" Wake me up at Bilbao," she said. " Between here and there, you will have had time to think."

With which she fell asleep in her *butaca*, very much as Turenne, after the battle, went to sleep on his cannon.

The afternoon was spent visiting the harbour and the town. Halphan seemed to be at the same time very proud and somewhat embarrassed, as he displayed his fair conquest at his side. For he was well known along the water-front, and although he tried to avoid compromising encounters with certain sailors, Marthe was not deceived. It was only too evident to

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her that her companion played the part of a pirate captain, among the cosmopolitan riff-raff of the place which, in this respect, resembled all large seaports.

Luck was very soon to enable our secret agent to confirm her suspicions.

Halphan begged her to wait for him on the terrace of a café, pretending an urgent appointment.

At a neighbouring table she noticed an old tar, with a pipe stuck in his heavily-bearded mouth. He was typically part and parcel of the local population. Hoping to get some information from him, Marthe asked :

" Do you speak any French ? "

" A little," he answered rather roughly.

" Then you may be able to help me in satisfying a desire I have," she continued, slipping a twenty-peseta note on to her neighbour's table. " I am on an excursion here with a friend, and I should like to see a German submarine. I'm told they come here very often. What am I to do ? "

" You'd better ask the officer who is with you," the man replied, handing back her note.

And as he walked away, he muttered :

" There's another who will be fished out of the harbour one of these days, like that woman yesterday, with a dagger stuck in her back."

This sinister *a parte*, which she of course pretended not to have heard, caused a little shiver to run down Marthe's spine, for the first time since she had embarked on her new career. Not that she was impressed by the veiled threat which the old tar had dropped. But she had only now become aware of the scorn felt by the man in the street, whatever his nationality, for spies and also for those who employ them.

" I am not yet hardened," she reflected.

When returning to the station, she could not resist the impulse to make Halphan take her through the most deserted streets of the town. She even declined

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to let him enter the same compartment with her, for the journey back to San Sebastian.

"You are entirely too well known," she argued. "I should compromise myself if I travelled with you again. I have your word, anyway, that you won't seek to have further dealings with me before introducing me to your chief."

With which she closed the door in Halphan's face.

A week passed, during which there were no developments.

And yet, it seemed to her that something had changed in the world's attitude towards her, although the external signs of this were perhaps trivial. She could not help noticing that the impressive porter of the Continental, who had paid little attention to this modest client, was now obsequious; and the chambermaid, who had been very slow in answering the bell, now came as promptly as if she had popped out of the panel in the door. Only the messenger who was usually on duty at the entrance, and who was on the friendliest terms with the majestic porter, maintained his attitude of total indifference towards her; but then, he appeared to be of secondary importance.

"I seem to have become one of the family," Marthe reflected. "Halphan is probably trying to complete his inquiry about me, which I cut off so abruptly, and so he has set his agents to watch me."

She felt worried, however, because the situation was not developing as rapidly as she would have wished. Sometimes she wondered whether she had not dealt too roughly with her recruiting agent.

The tension told heavily on her nerves. As a relief, she maltreated Kraut, who for her sake was losing a hundred *louis* per night at baccara.

Finally, she met Halphan face to face, one morning on the Concha. He was in the company of a man of about forty, short, very dark, wearing thick smoked

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glasses and a pointed beard, who seemed to be at the same time stern and enigmatical.

He was the first to see Marthe, and he stopped to stare at her before Halphan could nudge him and say briefly in German :

" There she is."

The stranger immediately looked in another direction.

" That is the chief," Marthe thought, pretending to have noticed nothing, although she had overheard what Halphan said besides witnessing the whole performance. " It seems to me I have seen him somewhere. But how could he have recognized me before Halphan pointed me out to him ? At all events, we shan't be long now."

As a matter of fact, when she returned to her room next night, she found a note pinned to her pillow.

" It must be important, for them to place it so discreetly in full view," she said, and she read :

Continental Palace Hotel,
San Sebastian.
Monday, July 25, 1916.

Dear Madam,—

Pray be so good as to pardon me for neglecting you. I could not do otherwise, and it is necessary that our relations be concealed as far as possible from the public.

For this reason, I ask if you can receive me in your room after lunch, between 2 and 3 p.m., so that we may talk and make our arrangements ?

If you are prevented, leave a letter for me at the hotel desk.

Otherwise I shall call on you after lunch.

With my respectful compliments, H. H.

" Good ! " Marthe the aviator concluded as she got into bed. " My first flight was fairly successful. All that remains for me to do now is to stand my examination as a pilot. Unless I am very greatly mistaken, the examiner will be particularly indulgent towards me to-morrow."

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At the appointed hour, Halphan came to her room.

The interview which followed was of brief duration. The recruiting officer merely delivered the orders which had been passed on to him :

" To-morrow, you will take a walk in the Alderdi-Eder Gardens, at about 3 p.m. They are wellnigh deserted at that hour. Someone who knows you now, and who wears thick smoked glasses, will come up to you and say, ' Follow me.' The rest is your affair, and I shall see you again only when I am instructed to do so."

With this, he started to leave the room.

" Oh ! I almost forget to tell you one thing," he added, as if a thought had suddenly struck him only when he reached the threshold. " If you agree to join us, it must be understood that you serve as a soldier. Consequently, if you happened to betray us——"

" I should be found some fine morning, at the foot of the Urgull Rocks, like that woman fished out of Bilbao Harbour ten days ago to-day, with a knife stuck between her shoulder-blades."

" How did you know that ? " Halphan exclaimed. " The newspapers did not mention it."

" How did you know, yourself ? " Marthe retorted.

" Oh—I—why, it's my business to know everything," the beater said, somewhat embarrassed. " Such incidents occur frequently in Carmen's country, and nobody even mentions them. The Spaniards have always been incorrigibly jealous, you see ; they cannot tolerate the thought of being duped."

" I must have some Spanish blood in my veins," Marthe remarked, toying with the damascened dagger from Eibar.

Halphan observed her for an instant, then took his leave, concluding the interview with an evil smile and a more or less flattering remark :

" You and I were certainly predestined to understand one another."

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CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE FOR SUPREMACY

WHEN she had finished lunch next day, Marthe did not start out immediately on her expedition. Instead, she went up to her room, where she stood motionless for some moments, in deep reflection. A plan which had suddenly occurred to her had taken firm hold upon her mind.

Having reached her decision, she acted with the swiftness which was part of her nature in similar circumstances. She sat down at her table and wrote a letter with a resolute hand flying across the page so swiftly that she seemed scarcely to allow time for thought.

She gave the text a very attentive reading, before folding it in an envelope which she addressed and sealed with wax. Next, she placed the first envelope within a second, closing and addressing this in turn.

Then she gave herself a thorough inspection in the mirror, and went downstairs again.

The impressive porter was at his place beside the entrance door. Near him was the head of the messenger service, a tall dark-haired youth, with a wide-awake air but who seemed to give himself very little concern about the possible needs of the guests. The two were lounging in their seats, as the day was warm and most people were still in their rooms for the *siesta*.

They were chatting familiarly in German, and took no heed of Marthe as she approached. They became mildly attentive, however, and got up at last when

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she drew close to them and put her letter conspicuously on the hotel desk, where they could not fail to see it.

" I am going to meet some friends," Marthe said to the porter. " It is possible I may not return to-night. In that case, an engagement I have made must be cancelled, and I shall ask you to have this letter delivered before 8 p.m. at the address indicated, so that I may be excused."

She had glanced at the porter as she spoke, and she saw him start slightly. With Flot trotting in her wake, she went to the entrance, the messenger opening the door and dashing out into the street to hail a cab.

One happened to be at hand, and as Marthe was about to get in, she heard an anxious voice muttering almost in her ear :

" I hope there's nothing of a compromising nature in your letter ? "

Marthe glanced in amazement at the man who thus addressed her. Without turning his head, the messenger continued :

" Fifth Bureau. The porter is in the pay of the enemy."

" Good for you, my boy ! " Marthe murmured between her teeth. " Have no fears, I knew what I was doing."

Then she cried out to the coachman :

" To the Alderdi-Eder."

The messenger, bowing low to the guest for whom he had called a cab, muttered :

" Well done ! "

The cab drove off at the leisurely pace of its wheezy horse.

As Halphan had said, the Alderdi-Eder Gardens are almost deserted at such an hour. Apart from the ceaseless splashing of the fountain which has given its name to the famous esplanade, no sound was to be heard, and the air seemed lifeless.

While Flot, scornful of the notices warning dogs off

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the flower-beds, indulged in improvised races among the plants, Marthe sat in a shady and secluded corner.

Her deep meditations combined annoyance with gratitude at the thought that her chief had caused her to be kept under surveillance, without her knowledge, ever since she had arrived in San Sebastian. And now, the presence of this agent was revealed and his help was offered at the critical juncture.

Three o'clock struck on the chimes of San Vincente. But on this day nobody at all except herself had penetrated into the zone of silence represented by the gardens.

"Have they changed their plans?" Marthe wondered. "Or was my letter opened too soon, spoiling everything?"

She had no sooner framed this question than she saw a big car of German make come to a stop not far from her. The stranger with the dark glasses, whom she had noticed on the Concha, got out. Before he had had time to look about and detect her, Marthe went up to him and leaped swiftly into the car, Flot jumping in ahead of her.

Without a word, the man followed and sat down beside her, while the car, whose motor had been kept running, started off at top speed.

The battle for supremacy between the two adversaries was thus beginning in the closed space of a car speeding at a hundred kilometres an hour over the dusty roads of Spain.

But it began in silence, each adversary guarding his positions. The thought of the letter, which might have been opened too soon, again returned to Marthe's mind with unpleasant vividness. Where was this silent man taking her?

As I have already had occasion to remark, even the most extraordinary occurrences seemed to have no hold on her. Such privileged characters never really prepare themselves for what is coming, since they

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know very well that they are most completely masters of themselves when facing unexpected situations.

Nevertheless Marthe, who in her career as an aviator had already on two occasions met with accidents, knew that there existed ditches in the earth and invisible wires in the air. Against such obstacles no last-minute manœuvre, however swift it may be, can avail.

She therefore invariably took two precautions. Prior to a flight she would test her control levers, and before landing she would carefully examine the ground.

She had prepared herself similarly for the adventure on which she had now embarked, by foreseeing as well as she could both the start and the finish, while leaving a wide margin for events to develop. Not for one moment did she dwell on the complications which might arise from her meeting with the stranger. She knew with whom she was dealing and what she wished to do with him. That information sufficed for her.

This being the case, she settled down comfortably on the soft cushions of the luxurious motor-car. Putting Flot as a shield between her neighbour and herself as she rested in a half-reclining position, she waited for the other party to attack when he was ready.

Fully five minutes passed. The car had now reached open country, and its mysterious owner had still not uttered a single syllable.

Marthe reflected to herself :

" Perhaps he wants me to fire the first shot."

She accordingly adapted herself to the situation.

" Don't you think," she said, " that we look like two lovers who have just had a quarrel ? "

The words seemed to wrench the man out of a dream. Adjusting his glasses, he answered in excellent French, which however betrayed him every now and then by a guttural inflexion, part German, part Spanish :

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"I had the very different impression that we resembled two lovers who have not yet thought of what they can say to each other."

Marthe reflected:

"The controls are working pretty well."

So she continued her methodical examination.

"Halphan told me," she said, "that you had something to tell me in earnest. I doubt whether it can be for the sake of remarks like the one you have just made, that you are trying to break the speed record between San Sebastian and Tolosa."

Marthe observed that the man hesitated before replying. But suddenly she felt a hand seeking hers under Flot's long silky hair. The shield was transformed into a link, and she took note that the beginning she had made was a good one.

She thought:

"The captain was right, I must have hooked this big fish soon after arriving. I have been pulling him along on my line ever since without suspecting it."

It was easy to guess, now, why she had had that feeling, when she saw the man with Halphan on the Concha, that she had met him somewhere. She must have crossed his path in many places while taking no heed for him.

The better to land her catch, Marthe feigned to withdraw her hand. But she ran no risk of losing him. The hook was too firmly embedded in the fish's throat.

"You saw me only two days ago for the first time," the stranger said in a strangled voice. "But ever since you arrived, I have been seeing you constantly. I have done everything I could to attract your attention, but I did not succeed. And now, suddenly, I have you here beside me, up against me——"

With an abrupt movement, the stranger sought to draw closer. But two cries rang out simultaneously.

Flot, rudely jostled, thought he was threatened and

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yelped sharply, while Marthe sat up, all a-quiver, affecting utmost indignation.

"This is a trap into which your beater has led me!" she exclaimed. "Your spy is then broken to all trades?"

The man leaned over towards her, without speaking.

"I warn you," said Marthe, "that if you move I shall throw myself out of the car."

She seized the handle and threw open the door, which crashed against the carriage-work.

The man, alarmed, caught her by the arm.

"Madame, stop, I beg of you!" he pleaded. "Listen to me for just a moment. Afterwards, I shall do whatever you say, I swear it."

An instant later he continued in a calmer tone:

"We are already at our destination. Here is the village to which I wished to bring you—Urumea. It has a quiet little hotel, with a terrace commanding one of the finest views in all the Basque country. You will feel at home there, and our interview will come to an end whenever you wish."

The car, after passing through several narrow shaded streets, slowed down and stopped before a big inn. The porter hurried out at the call of the motor-horn, and stood at attention, like a sentinel in the presence of his commanding officer. As the two alighted, the stranger returned the military salute he had received.

Marthe followed him indoors, reflecting:

"He is certainly very much at home. This time there can be no possible doubt—it is a trap."

Yet she showed no trace of hesitation, as she went in the wake of her escort up a seemingly endless flight of stairs. In sharp contrast with the blinding daylight without, darkness prevailed here. They had mounted a hundred steps or so, when they came out on a terrace shaded to some extent by pampas-grass and creepers among which grew roses and jasmine.

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The terrace was deserted. A bottle in a bucket of ice and two glasses waited on a table. Everything had been arranged so that no service should be required. The Skylark knew that she had been put in a cage.

She cast just a glance over the frail balustrade and into the depths below, reflecting:

"Very good so far. And now for the nose-dive."

Fifty feet above the level of the earth, she felt thoroughly at ease. So she was perfectly calm when settling herself in the wicker arm-chair which the stranger brought forward. It seemed to her that she was in the cockpit of her plane. She was conscious that the north-east wind, which blows across the Basque landscape, as the sun begins to decline, already whipped her cheeks. Her hands mentally grasped the control levers of her machine, ready for the next manœuvre.

It was as well that she felt prepared to meet any emergency. Because no sooner was she seated than an ardent appeal reached her ears. It seized upon her spirit as if her plane had dropped into an air-pocket, only to be borne away by a sudden blast. The stranger was on his knees, pouring out an impassioned declaration.

"Listen to me, at present," he pleaded, "for you must see that if I am at home here, I am at the same time your prisoner. For nearly two months I have been so, while you have never deigned to turn your head for so much as a glance at me. And yet my shadow merged constantly with yours, as if our two destinies had already been united. During all these weeks, each night as I went to bed and every morning when I got up, I have resolved to speak to you. But whenever I have attempted to do so, I have measured the gulf which separated us, and I have dreaded to remain lost in it for all time if I sought to cross it prematurely.

"You are French and I am German," he continued.

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"Our two races are grappling daily at each other's throats and are rending each other to pieces. How could I hope that you would allow me even to speak to you? Had I the right to do so, when the office I hold, almost of an official nature, in Spain, would have sufficed to make me compromise you irretrievably by so much as speaking to you?

"But I could bear it no longer. I was on the point of risking everything, even of losing you for ever by a brutal effort to win you, when we met on the Concha. It was so unexpected that you must have seen me catch hold of the arm of my agent to steady myself, when he pointed you out to me as the woman who would agree to serve our cause.

"It was therefore you yourself who deliberately removed the hopeless obstacle rising up in the way of my love and my will. Permit me first of all to express my fervent gratitude, and to kiss the hand which has released my mad hopes."

The flow of words ceased. But the armour of reserve which protected Marthe had not broken down. She knew the moment had come to take her levers firmly in hand once more. She did so with a swift, brutal stroke which caused the stranger to tremble for an instant.

"I am willing to admit," she said, "that at first you frightened me. Now, you fill me with loathing."

As she spoke, she fixed her eyes upon his, which he held riveted on hers. It was as if this battle between their wills were to be decided by that exchange of intense looks; the first to weaken would then be struck the more surely, ending the conflict.

The stranger's eyes were the ones to fall. He attempted to create a diversion.

"Have a care," he said in a low voice. "You have realized, have you not, that the people at this inn are all in my service?"

"I have understood it so well," Marthe answered,

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" that yesterday I warned your beater that I should not be caught like the Spanish woman who was stabbed at Bilbao. Before leaving the hotel at San Sebastian to follow you, I therefore handed to the porter a letter to my consul, which will be delivered to-night if I do not return."

The stranger got on his feet. He stumbled uncertainly, held in the grip of an inner struggle which caused him to take a few steps towards the door as if to call for help, before he recovered his self-mastery. Then he came back, fumbled in his coat pocket, and held out an envelope to Marthe, saying :

" Here is your letter. The seal is unbroken."

An almost imperceptible smile of triumph flitted across the young woman's tightly-pressed lips.

" You may read it," she said. " The letter is yours, since you stole it."

The man hesitated, but his curiosity as chief of the Intelligence Service was too strong for him. He roughly tore open the first envelope, and grew livid as he read the address written on the second envelope :

" Care of the French Consul, to be forwarded urgently to the Chief of the Fifth Bureau at the General Staff."

This time, he waited for no suggestion from Marthe as he tore open this second envelope, sealed with pale grey wax bearing the emblematic bird of France, the skylark, in full flight. He broke the outspread wings in his haste to get at the contents.

In a voice which choked at moments, he read aloud :

My dear Captain,

I have at last succeeded, after nearly two months of efforts, in making contact with one of the chiefs of the German Intelligence Service in Spain.

I am off to rejoin him, having accepted a mysterious appointment and not knowing as yet whether I shall return from it safe and sound.

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If I disappear, you will know in what direction to look for me, dead or alive.

If I succeed with my mission, you will get a line from me to-morrow, which I shall send through the usual channel.

Permit me to remind you that I have not yet received my monthly pay amounting to 5,000 francs.

Living is expensive for a woman in San Sebastian.

Faithfully yours,
E.M.A.* 125.

The stranger seemed to be stunned, for a moment, by the violence of the blow.

When he raised his head, however, he had completely recovered his self-possession. He spoke with the formidable calm of a judge passing sentence.

"You belong, then, to the French Intelligence Service?" he asked.

"Yes, I have belonged to it for some two months," Marthe answered with imperturbable calm.

"And you tell me so, without being obliged to speak?"

"Pardon me, you forced me to tell you. You were in a state of temporary madness rendering you capable of anything. You are at present restored to your senses."

As he remained silent, Marthe added:

"I hope that you will now permit me to retire."

She got up as she spoke, and continued:

"Having surrendered my arms to you, perhaps I may enjoy the right to leave with the honours of war, as is customary between loyal adversaries."

With that, she went towards the door leading from the terrace to the stairs.

The stranger sprang ahead of her, blocking her way.

"You shall not leave here while I am alive!" he shouted.

* *État-Major de l'Armée*, General Staff.

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" Then I shall leave only after I'm dead," Marthe answered.

And drawing out the sharp dagger from Eibar, she planted the point firmly against her left breast.

They faced each other, scarcely two paces apart. The man seemed to be pulling himself together in order to spring. But the clear eyes of the airwoman were once more fixed on his, paralysing his will.

The stranger was torn by an inner struggle of incredible violence ; his face, livid at moments, would flush to a deep purple, only to grow pale again.

A still more formidable conflict raged behind the impassive features of the young woman.

But suddenly she let the dagger fall, while a strange light glowed in her eyes, as if all the glory of the sunset sky had filled them with memories of the dying day.

The stranger leaped forward. His face almost touched hers.

" Coward ! " she cried, and then resolutely sealed her lips, as her last frail defence, threatened by the greedy mouth of the conqueror who was bending over her.

Her eyes, too, were closed. Her thoughts had borne her beyond the gold-tipped peaks of the Pyrenees, towards the tragic *cote* 180 at Mernancourt.

The dead there could now rest in peace, for Marthe was assured of her vengeance.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE DOUBLE-AGENT

MARTHE herself told me of the events I have just related. She had returned from Spain for a brief visit to Paris, and had called on me next day in the rue Jacob apartment where we had last met.

Speaking in the even, almost monotonous tone which was habitual with her when discussing episodes in which she had played a part, she retraced for me the main lines of the drama staged on the terrace of the inn at Urumea.

She always reduced such situations to their essentials, and was completely sincere in dealing with them. But to play with success a part like the one for which she had been enrolled by me, two other exceptional qualities, contradictory in nature, were demanded.

A " double-agent," in order to do his job, must be endowed with a composure which nothing can disturb, together with an imagination ever on the alert. Thus he adapts himself to the incidents which are continually being precipitated by the agitated life he leads, while he assimilates their substance almost instantaneously. Failing this, he will be swept on by the current of events without being able to guide them, or he will be incapable of turning their unstable elements to his own uses.

But furthermore, like the bee making honey by which others are to profit, the double-agent faithfully and indeed automatically brings home to the hive his precious burden which the queen bee, who represents the governing principle, will sort out and put in order, according to a methodical plan.

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It was for me to play the part of the queen bee on the strength of the scattered information brought in by the various agents working under me.

As I reflected upon these elementary principles of our technique, I almost forgot to listen to what Marthe was saying, and I had ceased seeking to reconstruct ideas from the material she had collected for me.

What brought me back suddenly to the realities before me was the shock of learning from her own lips that she had denounced herself to the enemy at Urumea.

"But that was sheer folly!" I exclaimed. "What sort of confidence do you expect him to have in you now?"

"Just as much as you, neither more nor less," she answered coolly.

This was, however, one occasion when I had to insist upon knowing her motives. After some moments of reflection, she gave me the full statement which I considered necessary.

It had appeared as absolutely certain, she said, that the porter at the Continental and also the chambermaid were in Halphan's service. This meant that Halphan would have warned the porter of the meeting about to take place between herself and their big chief. Obviously, the porter's duty would then be to keep an eye on her, lest she should attempt to spring some sort of trap.

This interview would have a decisive character, whatever the solution reached. She had therefore made up her mind to reveal the fact that she belonged to the French Secret Service. It was bound to be known sooner or later; and by not attempting to conceal it, she would remain free to come and go as she pleased in France.

"Do you see, now, the reason for my action?" she asked, and continued without waiting for a reply:

"Judge of the surprise which the porter must have felt when, barely an hour before my appointment with his chief, I brought him a letter for the French Consul, with whom I also claimed to have an appointment; the letter was to be delivered only in case I did not return.

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"This was a startling development, and the duty of any agent would be to report it without loss of time.

"I had calculated that the porter would act accordingly. But his chief, even when he had the letter in hand, would be puzzled to know what to do. It's not an easy matter to open a letter and close it again so that nobody will suspect it has been read; and remember that my letter had to be delivered, or else I myself would demand its return. There was no time for delicate laboratory work. The chief would therefore hold the letter temporarily, waiting for developments in the course of his conversation with me. If he opened it himself, it would be either in my presence, or after I had left him. Either way, I should have had my chance to speak first.

"There had been one other alternative. The porter might have neglected the opportunity I gave him with the letter. But then I was still free to introduce the question myself. Either way I seemed safe. But events worked out as I had expected they would.

"I admit I had some moments of anxiety, first during my long wait in the Alderdi-Eder Gardens and then in the motor, when the man with the smoked glasses would not say a word. It occurred to me that if the letter had been opened and read prematurely, serious complications might result.

"On the terrace of the inn at Urumea, I felt that I absolutely must know what had happened to this letter. It was in order to find out that I volunteered the information that I had written to my consul before starting. The stranger then took my letter out of his pocket, and after that the game was in my own hands.

"Do you blame me now?" Marthe asked in conclusion.

"Far from blaming you," I answered, "I think it was a master-stroke, excellently planned and perfectly executed. You remained throughout true to your part as a double-agent."

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" At all events, I made him show his hand at just the right moment," she said simply.

As I tried to read, now, in her blue eyes, they looked smooth and impenetrable like certain lakes high up in the mountains, a mere glance at which disconcerts one with thoughts of their mysterious depths reaching down to the secret recesses of the earth—or of instinct.

She took a silver case from her bag and selected an Oriental cigarette, scented with amber. After striking a light, very slowly, she held out the case to me as she blew a first puff.

" Examine this cigarette case," she said. " I won it from its owner when I surrendered my arms, as represented by the dagger from Eibar."

It was a plain silver case bearing in one corner two interlaced initials, H.K., surmounted by the coronet of a barony which to-day is famous in Germany. One of the members of this family incarnates the purest glories of the Imperial Army, to the extent that even his alliance with Social Democracy has been unable to dim his reputation among the fiercest Racists.

" Do you make anything out of that ? " Marthe queried, in a gently mocking tone.

" No," I answered, " but we shall soon be on the track. I brought with me a series of photographs of Germans well known in Madrid, which our Service sent to me this morning at your request."

I spread out the photographs on the table before her. Marthe immediately exclaimed, with the air of a good little girl who has worked out a picture puzzle :

" There ! That is he, unquestionably. Who is he ? "

" Look at the back and you will see."

She eagerly read the inscription :

" Baron von Kolberg, Chief of the Naval Intelligence Service in Spain."

" So he is an official personage ? " she asked.

" Not at all," I answered. " Only the Civil, Military,

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and Naval Attachés whom Germany groups in her Embassies have an official quality. The others, such as the Baron, have no special title. They depend on G.H.Q. which gives them their orders direct. They are strange beings who are guided by a secret hand, perhaps the hand of the Emperor himself, or at all events that of the commanding general, in compliance with the secret aims of their war policy, which sometimes differs widely from the policy dictated by the Wilhelmstrasse to its emissaries.

" These officers dispose of extensive resources in the way of influence and money. As a consequence, their regularly accredited comrades are often jealous of them. Such is sometimes the case even with the Ambassadors themselves, always ticklish on the point of their prerogatives. At Madrid as elsewhere, the official diplomatic personages greatly dislike the troublesome and sometimes compromising proximity of these satellites who disturb the regular course of traditional functions. They are invariably delighted when they can do an ill turn to the non-career diplomats. You may rest assured that the Baron must be on very strained terms with the Prince who represents Germany at the Spanish Court."

" I shall remember that," Marthe Richard said meditatively.

" What do you purpose to do next, in the paradoxical situation which you have created for yourself ? " I inquired.

" I shall tell you by and by, if you will let me finish my story first," Marthe answered. " But permit me to insist on one point which I consider essential. I don't intend to depend in any way on your official services in Spain. The Baron is free to act as he pleases. I wish to be free also, otherwise the contest between us would be too unequal."

" You need have no fear," I reassured her. " Our instructions are formal in that respect. The actions

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of our secret agents must remain completely unknown to our accredited representatives abroad."

"That's understood, then. But I have something else to ask. I want you to mention me to your other agents only when circumstances leave you no choice in the matter."

"That is the absolute rule of the German service, excepting only the Counter-Espionage Service. With us, the rule is rather less strict."

"So I have perceived," Marthe commented rather dryly.

"You are doubtless alluding to the unexpected intervention of Pedroso, the messenger at the Continental," I replied. "Yet you must admit that he fired his shot at just the right moment. Anyhow, Pedroso is no longer in surveillance over you, he is your friend since seeing how admirably you detected a German agent in the person of the hotel porter. He may also feel flattered by the fact his disguise succeeded in escaping the eye of an aviator like yourself. For I don't suppose that you recognized the bearded old tar at Bilbao, who intimated to you rather crudely that spying was not the safest of professions, even in a neutral country."

"What! He was the hotel messenger?" Marthe exclaimed. "You may extend my congratulations to him. His appearance and his words made me shiver, and that's not easy to accomplish. I shall embrace him when I see him."

"You will have frequent opportunities, for Pedroso has managed so well that he has been engaged for the season at the Palace Hotel, where you are to put up in Madrid. We have followed the example set by our adversaries, and have posted agents of our own in the big hotels without the knowledge of the managers."

"So much the better," Marthe said dreamily. "I may need Pedroso. That being settled, I have one last service to request of you. I must have someone

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in France, to apply the plan I have induced the Baron to accept and which I hope you will approve in turn, even though it emanates from a rival."

"I am flattered to be receiving lessons from so skilled a teacher," I replied. "Besides, I have said my say. Now that I have emptied my kit-bag, let's see what you have left in yours."

"Oh, very little," she protested with nonchalance. "Do you want my purse?"

"No, quite the contrary, it is I who owe you a great deal of money. Since we are richer than when I last saw you, I shall at last be able to pay our debts."

While speaking I had taken out a wallet which luckily was more amply supplied than on the previous occasion.

But before I could produce any money, Marthe had tossed on the table a roll of Spanish bank-notes.

"Count them," she said. "There should be ten thousand pesetas."

"There's no need to count them. They belong to you. You have certainly earned them."

"I've already taken my share," she returned, drawing out another roll which seemed to be twice as big as the first.

"The ten thousand pesetas which I put on the table are yours, as a contribution to your secret funds," she announced. "I shall try to earn some more for you. Remember what I told you when I was leaving: the Germans shall pay."

I hesitated an instant, but only as a matter of form. I did not wish to reveal to Marthe that this was one of our impure sources of revenue. I had grown accustomed to the thing. The twenty-five thousand francs which she had just brought me would be added in our Black Funds to the fifty thousand marks which one of our agents in Switzerland had handed to me only a week earlier. He was, as a man, very much what Marthe was as a woman, and thanks to him we received gifts of several millions during the war.

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"So here we have an advance on account of future reparations," I said to Marthe. "I am greatly obliged to you. But to revert to what you were telling me before we reached this point in our conversation. Did I understand that you want me to appoint a comrade to act with you in France? For what purpose?"

"To serve as my double," she answered.

"If the double is to have a double, that will make four agents."

"Yes, and accordingly the Baron will be able to pay me fourfold."

"I begin to see the point."

"In a minute or two you will see it even better."

With that, she resumed the thread of her narrative.

"I left the inn at Urumea safe and sound, asking to be escorted to the railway station. For you will readily believe that I did not care to have another *tête-à-tête* in the automobile with the enterprising Baron.

"We made an appointment for the following day in the same deserted corner of the Alderdi-Eder. All that I required of my lover was that he should discard his smoked glasses, which had got to be rather too well known in San Sebastian. He consented, luckily.

"It is needless to lengthen my story by going into many details of this second interview. Only a few points were worth retaining.

"To begin with, it was the inevitable continuation of the scene which had developed between the two of us the day before. I was compelled to recall the Baron repeatedly to his duties as Chief of the German Counter-Espionage Service in Spain. He would keep forgetting that I was a French spy, and that it was as such that I had asked to enter his service.

"I even reminded him that in the closing lines of the letter I had written to you, I had mentioned your delay in sending me my month's salary, amounting to

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five thousand francs. The only effect of this was to arouse an indignant protest from him. He exclaimed :

" ' The idea of giving five thousand francs a month to a woman like you ! The French are mad ! You should have twenty thousand pesetas, and I promise them to you in advance.'

" ' In that case, you must show me how I can earn them,' I replied.

" ' There is only one way, and it is for you to remain with me,' he declared. ' I shall take you to Madrid, where you must stay near me. I need a recruiting-agent for France, and I know that nobody can resist you.' "

But Marthe was not prepared to yield to such a request, and so she showed that she could at all events resist herself. She had not the least intention of enlisting as spies poor devils who were sure to be shot for their pains. And although there is no code of honour in the Secret War, there is such a thing as fair play. So she did not deceive him.

" He seemed to fear very greatly for my own safety," she went on to tell me. " On no condition must I engage personally in a dangerous game, he said. But surely I could induce others——

" I was equally firm in declaring I could not. Then an idea occurred to me. I made it clear that I had no desire to find myself put up before the execution post at Vincennes, but I suggested to him a solution which he accepted after vainly arguing against it.

" I swore solemnly that I would not personally try to gather any information whatever in France. It was rather the limit, though, for him to be paying me to act as his agent here, and at the same time pledging me not to get the information he wanted ! We agreed, however, that I should secure for him one or two safe agents occupying good positions, to whom I should forward his *questionnaires*. They in turn would send him their reports, written in sympathetic ink and delivered at secret addresses."

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" You got all that out of him ? " I asked eagerly.

" I have the addresses," Marthe said, and added, in some confusion at not having secured everything at the very first stroke : " As for the sympathetic ink, just fancy, he hasn't yet been willing to tell me the formula for his famous product. He pretends that it is given only to agents who have been thoroughly tried out."

" Yet he surely has told you some formula for a secret ink ? "

" Yes. Guess which ? " Marthe laughed.

" I don't know. There are many."

" Apparently not, because it is the same as yours—antipyrine. Perhaps you also confide this only to agents whose sincerity has been proved beyond question ? "

" It is not quite the same, Marthe," I replied, to conceal my embarrassment. " I am told that the German antipyrine is of far better quality than ours."

" That is just what the Baron said. But since he added that French chemists were totally incapable of discovering a product like the new one the Germans are using, he will be compelled to deliver up his secret when we find my double."

" Have you any idea as yet about the choice of your future agent ? "

" None at all. Can you assign one of your own officers here for the purpose ? "

" I had another suggestion to make."

" What is it ? "

" It will be difficult to reconcile you to the solution I have found. But you see, Marthe, in order for two agents to do well in team work, they must get on perfectly together. They must be united by at least a brotherly and sisterly affection."

" I understand. You wish to suggest my brother, who is at the front ? "

" No, I prefer an aviator."

" Which one ? "

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" The one who denounced you to me. That will be Y——'s punishment."

Marthe hesitated before replying. For the first time, it seemed to me I saw her blush at the unexpected offer I had made. I knew well enough that among the many aviators who had sighed as they watched this Skylark cleave the skies, the one whom I had just mentioned appealed to her very particularly.

" That one or another, it doesn't matter," she answered at last. " The essential thing is for him to follow our instructions obediently."

" And now we are agreed as to the main lines," I said, " I leave the staging of the piece to you."

" I shall get ready at once for the dress rehearsal."

" What rehearsal, Marthe? You certainly don't expect to invite the Press critics? "

" No, only the dresses."

" I understand less and less."

" So I see, and that is why I am exasperated. The Germans, like the Spaniards, know that they must have women along with them for the Secret War. You have heard of their big chief? "

" Yes, I know, the Fräulein, the Emperor's own spy."

" She must be an A1 specimen. I'd like to match myself against her. Whenever the Baron mentions her, he gives a military salute."

Marthe broke off, only to continue with intensity :

" Oh, Captain! In your many factories and laboratories you may perfect new engines of destruction, but you will never succeed in either suppressing war or even controlling it, until you realize that men wage it on the strength of their instincts. And you know very well what is the strongest instinct of all!

" Whether they seek to dazzle us or just to support us, warriors always keep women before their eyes—mother or sister, wife or little friend. If I were the Fräulein, I should put above the entrance to my office an inscription patterned after the one seen in front of

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dancing-places in the Paris suburbs: 'No Admission Except for Men With Their Partners.'

"Now I must go, as I have to make the best of my opportunities before entering the dance."

"How long will you need to make ready for your campaign?" I asked.

"It will take me a good fortnight to get my clothes," she answered. "You can't help there, for I doubt whether among your stock of properties for equipping Intelligence agents you habitually keep the thousand and one trifles which are our weapons, and as such often turn out to be more dangerous than your cannon and munitions."

As she went out, she left behind her a perfidious trail of the "Eternal Feminine," the perfume then in vogue and with which "war godmothers" sprinkled their letters to soldiers at the front. So encouraged, the hardened men in the trenches would rush to the attack, irritated and entranced. And at the same time, there was about that perfume something as subtly dangerous as an asphyxiating gas.

I did not see Marthe again until the day before her departure for Spain, when she called to receive her final instructions. Y——, the aviator who had once denounced her, made the third party to our interview.

"Will you forgive me, Marthe?" he asked, even more deeply moved than she.

"Not just yet, Zozo," she answered—for such was the nickname she had given him. "You must first deserve my forgiveness."

But she held out her hand to him.

Next night she took the train which was to convey her to the firing line of the Secret War. Beside her on her comfortable seat, Flot was installed on a thick cushion cased in Cordova leather, a gift from the generous Baron, amid stacks of valises and veritable mountains of hat-boxes.

To open her campaign, Marthe had looted the rue de la Paix from end to end.

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CHAPTER IX

BETWEEN WOMEN

I MYSELF had telegraphed to the Baron von Kolberg, signing Marthe's name, to announce the return of his spy to Spain.

She intended to go straight to Madrid, where she knew that a room had been reserved for her at the Palace Hotel. And so she was greatly surprised when, alighting from the train at Irun for the customs inspection of her luggage, she all but ran into the man who wore the pointed beard and the shaded glasses.

" Follow me," he said, in a far gentler tone than he had used when they first met.

As he spoke, he shot a swift look along the entire length of the sleeping-car Marthe had occupied. But he was doubtless prompted less by a thought for his duties as chief of the German Intelligence Service in Spain, than by a sentiment common to men who have been kept waiting for a train. In a word, he wanted to make sure that during the voyage no other image than his own had found favour with her whom he had come to meet.

Marthe, flanked by a porter staggering under the weight of her bags and bandboxes, followed the Baron obediently as far as the waiting-room. The door communicating with the central hall was closed. But the Baron, thrusting aside the customs inspector who barred the way, slipped a huge tip into his hand and muttered the magic formula :

" Diplomatic luggage."

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A few moments later, the whole load was on the top of the limousine, which started off across country at high speed. It stopped only at Valladolid, where the Baron, perhaps wishing to justify himself for the way in which he had taken possession of Marthe at Irun, announced that he had come as a matter of duty and that they would start again for Madrid next day.

Marthe profited by the opportunity which this explanation afforded. She immediately announced that the trip had fatigued her and that she was going to rest.

"I shall leave you to attend to your business," she said, and upon retiring locked herself in her room.

Early next morning she was roused by a chambermaid with a message from the Baron. It seemed that he must pass through Salamanca on the way to Madrid, and they would have to leave very shortly.

On the road, however, von Kolberg, closely pressed by Marthe's questions, was forced to admit that he had made this particular detour only to kill time. He and his car being well known to all the personnel of the Palace Hotel, it would be dangerous for them to reach Madrid before midnight.

Marthe reflected inwardly:

"That must be the hour at which his agents come on duty."

She had guessed right, for it was the big porter from the Continental at San Sebastian, "that excellent Kauffmann," as the Baron called him, who greeted them at the door of the Palace Hotel and caused their luggage to disappear in a few seconds from the limousine.

In the midst of this operation, Kauffmann drew near and whispered something to von Kolberg, who seemed greatly annoyed.

"My wife wishes to see me at once," he said to Marthe. "She may have received in my absence fresh instructions sending me far away from Madrid.

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In that case I may not be here to-morrow. You will please excuse me. Besides, you are entirely at home in this hotel."

The Baron had, indeed, provided everything for her comfort. Not only had one of the best rooms in the hotel been reserved for her, but it was filled with magnificent roses.

"They are from Urumea," a card of the Baron's, pinned to the largest bunch and bearing several lines scribbled in pencil, took care to inform her.

On awakening, Marthe looked out from her windows upon one of the most elegant quarters of Madrid. She noticed especially the English parterre of the Salon del Prado stretching before her, marked to the north-east by the heavy obelisk of the Dos de Mayo. She asked the head waiter what that commemorative stone might signify.

"The resistance of the Spanish to the Emperor of the French," the man answered proudly, with a strong Bavarian accent.

Marthe reflected:

"This looks very much like an annexe of the inn. Here I am a prisoner once more."

To work off her feeling of irritation, she ran up to her room to throw a sleeveless coat on her shoulders, planning to go out. She was no sooner ready than she heard two gentle taps on the door. A messenger burst in and disappeared like a flash, after depositing a letter on the table. There had not even been time for her to make sure of the man's identity.

She tore the missive open nervously, supposing it must come from the Baron. Instead, she found only these words in French, without any signature:

You will be followed everywhere. Burn this paper.

She reflected:

"The service is French, at all events. The answer comes before one has even asked for anything."

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After destroying the note, she walked out to view the city.

As she passed through the big entrance door, with Flot trotting contentedly at her side, she noticed a Spanish policeman pacing up and down in front of the hotel. At first she did not pay any particular attention to him. But a little later she again found him on her track, when she stopped idly to examine the charming Fountain of the Four Seasons, by Velasquez. Then she realized the full value of the warning which Pedroso —for who else could it have been?—had given her just in the nick of time.

"Oh! So you are mobilizing the services of the Spanish police against me, my dear Baron!" she thought angrily. "Well! I shall show your hidalgos how we get the better of sleuths in Paris."

When reaching the corner of the Calle de Alcalá and the Paseo de Recolotos, she seemed to hesitate for a bare moment, turning from right to left as if seeking her way. The policeman stood at a distance of a few feet, observing her manœuvres. She pretended to see him for the first time.

"Excuse me," she said, stringing together the few phrases of Spanish which she had picked up during her stay in San Sebastian. "Can you tell me where the Baron von Kolberg lives? He is expecting me and I have lost my way."

Without a shade of hesitation, and without uttering a word, the police constable, like the gallant and conscientious Spaniard that he was, led her to a pretty little private house situated in the most aristocratic neighbourhood in Madrid.

"It is here," he said with a military salute, happy to have fulfilled his mission so successfully, since he was leading the woman he had been ordered to follow to the very house of the man who was paying for the job.

Marthe went up to the door and rang. A gigantic porter, or someone of the kind, came in reply.

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" I wish to see the Baroness von Kolberg," Marthe said. " I am sent here by her husband."

A few moments later, the two women were in each other's presence.

Marthe was the first to speak.

" I am Marthe Richard," she said in French. " For the past month I have been in your husband's service. I don't know whether he has already spoken to you about me ? "

The Baroness bowed slightly as though in acquiescence, but without replying. She was very slim and extremely elegant.

" I arrived at the Palace Hotel yesterday," Marthe continued. " The Baron found a message from you awaiting him, I believe, and he left me in the care of our friend the porter. But I don't know why I immediately had the impression that I was held under surveillance at the hotel itself, and then in the street. A mysterious-looking woman followed me the entire length of the Prado. This made me uneasy and I appealed to a police constable, hoping he might be able to give me your address. Fortunately, he knew it, and here I am, though somewhat upset. I may be very indiscreet, but I beg you to advise me, and to give me your assistance if you judge necessary."

The Baroness, her breath taken away for an instant by this abrupt intrusion in her home, was impressed by Marthe's natural tone and frightened look. She begged her visitor to be seated.

" My husband has told me your story, and he is founding great hopes on your intelligence and your connexions," she said. " It is true that he had no sooner arrived than he was compelled to leave again for an unknown destination. Of course you will understand that he does not tell me everything. But I believe he will return to-morrow. Between now and then, have no fears. We have our own people at your hotel, and nothing very serious can happen to you."

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Marthe listened in silence, looking very demure indeed as she sat there, Flot crouching with a semi-expectant air on the carpet at her feet.

"Furthermore," the Baroness continued, "you may rest easy in your mind about your own compatriots. They have no Intelligence Service in Madrid. They don't understand this kind of war," she added rather scornfully.

Which information highly edified Marthe, of course.

"I am deeply grateful to you for having reassured me," she answered politely. "Indeed, I had no sooner entered than I felt better about it all. This is even truer now, for allow me to say that I found you very congenial from the outset. I wish I were to deal with you in matters concerning my work. I find your husband very pleasant, but rather harsh at times. One can see that he is accustomed to dealing with marines under his orders."

"You are right. He is a real naval officer. It is only from patriotism that he accepted this difficult post, in which as much intelligence as courage is needed. He knew, also, that I could help him in certain awkward cases—like yours, which as you are aware is rather dangerous, so that we could not take too many precautions."

"You are meeting my fears half-way. If you will permit me, I have a service to ask of you."

"I shall consent all the more readily, since you are charming."

"Do you not think that, while waiting for your husband to find some less conspicuous place for our meetings, it would be better if you, and not he, came to the hotel to see me? It would be less compromising for me, and—if I dare say so—for the Baron. He can't acknowledge that I am his spy, and it would never do for people to suppose that I am—that I am——"

"His mistress," the Baroness interrupted sharply,

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having grown anxious in her turn. " You are entirely right. You have a very nice appreciation of the proprieties. I shall most earnestly advise my husband not to return to the Palace Hotel while you are there. And I hope that you will not remain there very long."

" I thank you from the bottom of my heart," Marthe replied, rising. " I shall wait for you all the afternoon, to-morrow. If it amuses you, I shall show you the very latest Paris creations. You will see that the fashions have completely changed, this winter."

" I had noticed that, just as soon as I saw you," the Baroness said eagerly. " Where did you get that tailored suit ? "

" Pousset's."

" And your hat—let me guess—it comes from Madou's ? "

" I should never have believed a German could be so Parisian."

" But I am a Spaniard ! " the Baroness protested energetically.

" I felt, somehow, that we were sisters," Marthe declared.

She withdrew timidly, very much as she had entered, leaving her new friend divided between delight and concern.

In the street, the worthy Spanish policeman had remained scrupulously on watch.

Marthe, glancing at him as he contemplated her with a silly, self-satisfied air, said to herself :

" All right, Baron ! You put the Spanish police on my trail. But I am now under the protection of your wife, and I believe I shall be well guarded."

Then, picking up Flot, she jumped into a taxi, and ordered in a loud tone :

" To the Palace Hotel."

But after turning the first corner, she changed her mind and said to the driver :

" Take me to the post office."

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Paying off the cab when she got there, she entered a telephone booth and rang up her hotel. The "excellent Kauffmann" answered the call.

"Did not Madame Marthe Richard of Paris arrive at the Palace Hotel last night?" she inquired in German.

"Certainly," the porter replied, reassured by the sound of his native language. "But she is out. Who am I to say asked for her?"

Marthe had already hung up, however, and an instant later she was gone.

Happy as a schoolgirl out of bounds, she amused herself wandering through the brilliant city streets. She wound up in front of the Royal Palace, where the guard of Spanish halberdiers and bombardiers was just being changed.

Returning at last to her hotel, she expressed astonishment at learning from the porter that a German lady had inquired for her over the telephone but had refused to give any name.

"That is strange," Marthe said. "I know almost nobody in Madrid, and not a single one of my friends speaks German, any more than I do myself.—Oh!" she exclaimed suddenly. "I know! It may have been the Baroness von Kolberg. I left her only an hour ago, and she was to make an appointment with me. Was it the Baroness?"

"I don't think so," Kauffmann answered. "I know the voice of the Baroness very well. Besides, she scarcely speaks any German."

"Then I beg you to inform the Baron of the incident just as soon as he gets home," Marthe said. "It is rather grave, isn't it?"

As she put the question, she centred on the porter a significant look which seemed to make a profound impression on him.

The message was delivered to von Kolberg with surprising promptness.

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Just as Marthe was putting the final touches to her toilet for dinner, the Baron, who in order to gain time must have made a non-stop return to Madrid, burst into the room without being announced.

He seemed angry and worried. He shouted :

" You must have been out of your senses, to go and visit my wife this morning. And what's the meaning of this story about the telephone call ? "

" I don't know whether or not I'm out of my senses," Marthe answered, " but what I do know is that my presentiments have proved to be correct, as they invariably are. It is certain that I am already under surveillance in Madrid, since people ring me up when I don't know as much as a cat in the whole city. You must stop coming to see me, and you must find an apartment for me without losing any time. Your wife understood all this perfectly. She promised me that she would be the one to transmit your instructions to me."

" My wife ? " questioned the astonished Baron.

" Tell her I shall expect her to-morrow," Marthe continued imperturbably. " We shall examine the situation together. For the Baroness is kinder than you are. You selfishly expose me to the gravest dangers."

" I ? Why, you know I made you promise——" the Baron tried to protest.

Suddenly, Marthe's self-control seemed to weaken. She spoke in excited tones :

" You are now given fair warning that the French have their eyes on me. You will bring me bad luck, I always knew you would ! "

With that, she indulged in a violent fit of hysterics, making such a disturbance that the Baron, beside himself with anxiety and also somewhat ashamed, thought it wise to make a swift exit.

No sooner had he gone than Marthe took out from her travelling-case a small bottle of smelling-salts and

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a minute fountain-pen. Dipping the point in the precious fluid prepared specially for our secret correspondence, and a small quantity of which I had given her, she hastily traced some lines on a blank sheet of paper, after which she wrote a very commonplace letter in ordinary ink, with widely-spaced lines.

She sealed the letter, and rang for the waiter, asking that the messenger be sent to her.

A few moments later, Pedroso himself stood respectfully at attention before his comrade in the Secret War.

"Be so good as to go and buy me a packet of cigarettes," she said. "On your way, you might post this letter—after reading the address," she added in an undertone.

Pedroso bowed and went out, having maintained complete silence, according to his wont.

It had all been managed with such art, that an indiscreet watcher at the keyhole, if there had been one, could not have surprised in either of them a single look or gesture intimating that they had ever met before.

Two days later I received, in my rue Jacob office, an enigmatical note between the lines of which the following words were revealed, subsequent to proper treatment:

> I have changed my mind. I abominate life in a Palace Hotel. I therefore intend to go to work. I shall found in Madrid a thoroughly up-to-date Beauty Parlour. Prepare for me the necessary material. Two weeks from now I shall come to get it myself in Paris. Between now and then, make my double send a letter to Spain declaring that he has already sent me four letters to the address agreed upon in Madrid, and that he is worried for my sake because I do not reply. Pedroso is promoted corporal. Faithfully yours,
>
> THE SKYLARK.

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CHAPTER X

THE LARK-MIRROR

MARTHE resolutely set about the task of finding the sort of establishment she needed. During two entire weeks she explored the city in all the most likely quarters, carefully weighing the drawbacks and the advantages of every place she visited. For Marthe was nothing if not thorough in whatever she undertook to do.

Her choice finally settled on a flat in an inconspicuous side street between the Puerta del Sol and the Theatro de Apollo, just off the famous Calle de Alcalá, one of the most frequented and also most fashionable streets in Madrid. Though the animation there may be marked only after the opening hour of the banks, it continues until the closing time of the big cafés, and lasts through a great part of the night. Romantic and indolent Spain is late to rise in the morning, but it shows the utmost reluctance to retire after the evening gaieties.

Perhaps Marthe, hard-headed as she was when once she had adopted an idea, would not have been so successful in starting her beauty parlour if the Baroness von Kolberg had not come resolutely to her support by advocating the scheme submitted to the Baron. Marthe's words about the compromising position in which her presence at the hotel placed the Baron rather than herself had not been forgotten. After a certain amount of resistance, von Kolberg finally gave his consent. Caught between the two women, he indeed stood no chance.

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The quarters chosen had formerly served as studio for a Parisian milliner, who because of the war had been compelled to return to Paris. There was a rather narrow but bright ground-floor shop, which communicated by an inner stairway with an *entresol* consisting of five rooms. All of these had plenty of light and air, and they could also be reached by the main stairway of the house.

The two separate entrances promised to make the establishment eminently suitable for Marthe's dual purpose.

A handsome gilt sign, most innocent in appearance, stood for the beauty parlour and for the Baron's secret meeting-place ; the perfumes and the cosmetics which enhance the dangerous charms of women being thus united under the same roof with the deadly intrigues of high treason. It was not so paradoxical a situation as might have seemed.

Mindful of the mirror-traps spread for skylarks, Marthe had baptized her little temple, dedicated at the same time to Venus and to Mars, " Au Miroir aux Alouettes "—the Lark-Mirror.*

Von Kolberg and the Baroness had been immensely pleased with the whimsical humour of the idea. They considered it delightfully bizarre and extremely French. But they did not suspect the full extent of Marthe's wit, being unaware that among us her own name was The Skylark.

As for the motive which had originally prompted Marthe to take such an initiative, compelling her generous protector to set on foot so costly an establishment, it was difficult to define clearly. I had been at a loss to understand it when I received her letter. I put the question to her when she came to Paris on her second visit, and she herself seemed at a loss for some moments.

* In France, the expression has entered into current use as the equivalent of fool-trap.

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" I really don't know what gave me the idea," she admitted frankly.

" You surely have had no experience in running beauty parlours ? " I said inquiringly.

" I know nothing whatever about them," she answered. " In fact, it was not so much an idea as a caprice. You see, Captain, the more absurd a woman's exactions may appear to be, the more readily will a man try to gratify them. Our instinct is constantly challenging the masculine sense of logic. And once a man begins to stand out against us on logical grounds, it's a thousand to one that he will get the worst of it."

I was not prepared to take up the cudgels on that point, but I was still unconvinced as to the wisdom of her action. My face evidently said as much, for Marthe resumed quickly :

" You are displeased with me, aren't you ? Well ! I'll tell you what lies at the root of your trouble. You would like me to be a piece of machinery with a spring you could wind up, or else an invention worked by means of an invisible string, like the toys displayed on the sidewalks of the boulevards at Christmas-time. There's always sure to be a crowd of idlers watching them in amazement. But I'm not built on those lines ; and so I haven't yet brought you very much in the way of results."

She reflected for some moments, during which I was careful not to interrupt her.

" Let us go over the entire situation, point by point, from the very start," she said presently. " My friend the naval officer is very fond of ' taking the bearings ' on all occasions. The expression is constantly on his lips. Let's do as much now.

" Well ! You will see how plainly one event has fitted in with another, in all that has happened to me. It is so clear that it ought to hit you straight between the eyes.

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" Here it is, briefly :

" First trip. In San Sebastian, Kraut tries to separate me from Halphan, who leads me straight to von Kolberg, who is only the more eager to take me into his personal service because he knows I belong to yours, and he feels sure of me only when he has me at his side.

" Second trip. In Madrid, Pedroso's cleverness in warning me enables me to identify immediately the police constable, who compels me to seek out the Baroness for the purpose of getting rid of him, and I unexpectedly secure her support against the Baron's enterprising attentions.

" There you have the sum total of my first four months. It's meagre enough, I am willing to admit. But what can we do about it ? "

" It is a great deal, Marthe," I interrupted. " And I don't hesitate to tell you that I can rest content with it."

" Yes, but you think it's all developing entirely too slowly. You want immediate results, with complete information about the German secret organization in Spain, its personnel, its methods, its means of action, and its potentialities of execution. Instead of which I bring you the plan for my little Institute of Beauty."

I could not help smiling as she said this. But she continued earnestly :

" The effect it produces on you is probably the same as with the Baron. ' It won't pay ! ' he keeps on repeating. And yet, it is already paying. It has brought me in some two hundred thousand pesetas—all of which did not emanate from the German Intelligence Service in Spain ! Which goes to prove that I have not only bled its coffers to a very considerable extent, but that von Kolberg himself is beginning to pour in quite a few of his own marks—to pay for mine. Furthermore, thanks to my Lark-Mirror, I hold the Baron and his wife on a string ; Halphan is a

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regular visitor of mine ; and the ' excellent Kauffmann ' thinks there is nobody like me in all the world, because I have promised him a twenty-five per cent. commission on all orders coming in from the Palace Hotel."

I now thought it well to enlighten Marthe as to the true reason for the reserve I had shown.

" I am very far from blaming you for making slow headway, Marthe," I said. " On the contrary, I was about to advise you to be rather more cautious. Read this report which came from Spain by the same train as yourself. You will then grasp my point of view."

The report which I had just received from one of my agents was as follows :

" Strife has broken out in the German Espionage Service. Major von Strasse, Chief of the Military Intelligence Service, reproaches his colleague of the Naval Service with running too swiftly through the cash which they hold in common for the Secret War. I am told that a rather violent scene occurred at the Embassy yesterday between the two men. The Major is said to have gone so far as to insinuate, after his colleague had left the premises, that a beauty parlour, installed as a screen for the Naval Espionage Recruiting Bureau, does not serve for such purposes alone."

As she read, vexation was evident on Marthe's features. She did not like the notion that another agent should send us information as explicit as this.

When she had finished, she reflected for some moments before saying very simply :

" This report does not cause me any concern. In fact, I expect to be able to promote my business on the strength of what I learn here. The Institute of Beauty will be even more useful than I had thought."

With the quickness of decision which characterized her when dealing with any change in a situation, Marthe proceeded to sketch out her new plan of action.

" I have only one service to request of you," she said. " Please ask my double, Zozo the aviator, to

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decrease, on any pretext he pleases, both the quantity and the value of the naval information he is sending. It is greatly appreciated, I may remark in passing. Well! What I want instead is a few really good tips of a military nature which you will select for him. Then I can make the best of this newly developed rivalry between the military and the naval Chiefs."

With that she left me, to go and buy the things she needed for setting herself up at the Lark-Mirror.

A little later, I escorted Marthe to the Gare d'Orléans, and in the swiftly falling dusk I helped her to take out from two large limousines the stacks of boxes and bundles which she was carrying back with her to Madrid. She had ample supplies of all the ammunition she needed for operations at her beauty parlour, or " Institute of Beauty," as she was pleased to call it. But she also had a number of the very latest hats and dresses for the Baroness von Kolberg.

While making myself as useful as I knew how in the circumstances, my train of thought was somewhat as follows :

" What would my old professors of the Military Art say, if they saw me at this instant ? At the German G.H.Q. a woman is the right arm of the Commander-in-Chief. And Marthe never meets me but she delivers a veritable course in secret strategy and tactics, far more useful than the school treatises on battles between large units. Women are bound to conduct the next war ! "

Upon returning to Madrid, she found her shop partly installed and almost ready for operations. She wrote to me only later that she had also found a stout bespectacled Castilian woman in charge of the desk, on the pretext that Marthe could not yet effect sales herself because she was not sufficiently acquainted with the language of Don Quixote.

It did not take Marthe long, however, to learn that Manuela, as the woman was called, had been put there

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as an agent of the Baron. The woman had been unmasked as a spy in France, so von Kolberg had given her this post of a safe and easy-going nature, while instructing her to exercise a discreet surveillance.

"The Baron would never have had sense enough to think of that," Marthe reflected.

She recalled the letter sent to me about the rivalry between the Baron and the Major, and the way the latter distrusted her.

"It must have been the Major who put the Baron up to this," Marthe commented inwardly. "That man is beginning to get on my nerves. I must get even with him, sooner or later."

The duenna made a sort of bric-à-brac shop out of the establishment, in which Marthe was allowed to play only a minor part. But in two rooms of the *entresol* which had been reserved for her personal use, the Skylark was absolute mistress.

It is a characteristic of these birds that the nest they make is simple and dainty, but specially designed so as to be very difficult to detect, in the furrow where it is placed, as soon as the first shoots of spring begin to turn yellow. The birds and beasts of prey, human and otherwise, then often keep a vain watch over the movements of the bird near her frail shelter.

Marthe had similarly chosen a discreet spot, and she went out very little. The warning I had given her had indeed impressed her more than she had cared to admit. She knew that she had to cope with two equally dangerous influences constantly on the alert, so that she was never lost from sight. One was the jealousy of the Baron, combined with the rancorous vigilance of his spy. The other was to be found in the agents of the Major who were ceaselessly prowling round the establishment.

She realized, then, that I had been right, and she must waste no time before exploiting as thoroughly as she could this little beauty parlour. Her lease had

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only a year to run, and bankruptcy might face her at any moment.

Barely two weeks after Marthe had left me, I received from her a small registered parcel. Inside, I found a leather case lined with silk enclosing a crystal flask.

Wrapped round it was a circular printed in Spanish, bearing the arms of the " Institute " : a mirror and skylarks on a field azure. There were printed instructions for using the contents.

I examined all this with keen interest. For I knew Marthe had thought up something new ; she never took any vain action. The flask had some purpose, and also the circular with the flaring advertisements of the beauty parlour.

" Unguleum, manufactured exclusively by the Institute, is the Elixir of Life for the nails, endowing them with vigour and brilliancy——"

" What on earth can all this mean ? " I asked myself as I read. " With Marthe, a man must always be reading between the lines of everything——"

I stopped on the thought. Manifestly that was what I should do now. It was worth trying, at all events.

Taking out from my safe the reagent for the special secret or sympathetic ink I had told Marthe to use, I spread it with a small brush over the circular. A few seconds later a message appeared, traced in letters of a fine reddish brown :

> You now hold one of the very latest of the German sympathetic inks. The Baron entrusted half a litre of it to the saleswoman who has a special mission to spy on me. He told her to fill twenty-four flasks with it. Of these, he himself took four. I profited by the absence of my duenna, who goes to lunch from noon till one-thirty, to take one which I paid for and recorded as having been delivered. Make whatever you can out of this. As a further indication, the Baron frequently puts in the post Spanish

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newspapers addressed to someone in Switzerland, and on which I have observed that my spy invariably puts double postage.

" At last ! " I said to myself. " Marthe has learned to regulate her fire. The machine-gun of her plane will now be getting down to business."

While waiting for the sequel, I sent Marthe's information together with the flask to the Commission of Postal Surveillance at Lyons. Under the very able management of Major Canat de Chizy, a former secret agent, and thanks to the advice and the complaisance of the world-famous chemist, Lumière, a highly perfected research laboratory was in operation there.

M. Landru, a learned and conscientious chemist of the Lyons school, who slaved night and day in the laboratory, was the one who solved the riddle and with surprising promptness, by means of the very exact French methods of chemical analysis.

One of Germany's most formidable weapons for the Secret War was thus delivered to us.

We shall see in the sequel what advantages we were able to derive from this. But, meanwhile, Marthe had encircled her objective with her fire, and she was thenceforth to attack it unremittingly.

Having seized a specimen of the sympathetic ink, her next thought was to follow up this clue and to find out the names of the special purchasers of the " Unguleum," as well as their addresses if possible. She also needed to know the instructions for use of the mysterious liquid, and the method for revealing it.

The rooms she occupied were not, however, placed so that she could readily exercise the sort of surveillance which was needed for this purpose. Excellent as they had promised to be when she had planned to run the Lark-Mirror and the Baron too according to her own ideas, the situation had changed radically in consequence of Manuela's presence Major von Strasse's

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suspicions, and Baron von Kolberg's jealousy. The little *entresol* indeed presented very serious drawbacks when it came to the tactical moves which Marthe now had in view.

When she went up by the inner stairway communicating with the shop, she came out on a small landing. The sitting-room door opened on this, and also one door of a room which the Baron used as an office. If the door of this office was closed, Marthe could reach the entrance hall only through the bathroom and the kitchen.

But the cook was a former servant of the Baroness von Kolberg, whom the latter had put at the disposal of Marthe, recommending her as a very trustworthy person. Marthe had thus a second guardian put over her.

Whenever a caller rang at the main entrance, Isabel would go and open, after carefully closing the kitchen door behind her. She would then swiftly show the visitor either into the Baron's office, or if somebody was already there, then into the sitting-room situated next to the office, and von Kolberg would go in person to greet his client.

The fact was that, while allowing the Baroness to believe that his secret agent was a highly valuable auxiliary for him, the Baron made no use at all of Marthe's services and even sought to prevent her from getting so much as a glimpse of the people who came to the flat.

This adroit little game had been going on for some two weeks, when Marthe suddenly averred that she could not continue to tolerate Spanish cooking. Her digestion rebelled, she said, against the "Cocido," or saffron-scented soup, and the "Gazpacho," flavoured with garlic and vinegar. Her plain statement of the facts, followed by a threat to go out to a restaurant for her meals, produced immediate effects.

Lunch-time was the only period in the day when

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the Baron could enjoy Marthe's company alone, for he could tell his wife that his work detained him at the office. But if the fear of seeing Marthe lunch in town reduced the Baron immediately to discussing terms, it was only after protracted resistance that he yielded to the mixed solution which she herself condescended to propose. It was that the mistress of the house should select the menu each day and keep an eye on the cooking.

By this clever stroke, Marthe had placed herself in the position of a first-line sentinel. Her presence being now necessary in the kitchen, she was enabled to watch, through a window opening on the main stairway, the comings and goings of everybody who approached the place.

No cook was ever more attentive to her stove and saucepans. Her victory over the Baron became more complete than ever. Delighted to enjoy the very finest French *cuisine*, he even induced his wife to accept, once in a while, an invitation to share in some dish prepared according to the recipe of "Tante Marie."

The clouds had been swept away from the brows of everybody concerned. A species of honeymoon happiness followed. Even the occupants of the far-away offices situated 282, Boulevard St. Germain were privileged to share in this. For a little dish was served to us by this remarkable cook, taking the form of a note the text of which, as well as I can reconstruct it from memory, was as follows:

> The Baron is employing in the French seaports two sisters, Spaniards, whose names are probably Maria and Julia Manzanarès. Both of them recently sojourned for about two months in the Mediterranean ports and they are now proceeding to the Atlantic ports. One is stout and probably was a brunette but she wished to change the colour of her hair and I made it red for her. Julia on the

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contrary is very fair, which should help you in your researches. I believe that the elder, who must be about forty years old, will pass through Toulouse to establish herself in Bordeaux, whereas Julia, who is nearing thirty, will proceed straight to Nantes and Brest. The two sisters will travel together as far as the frontier, where they will separate.

A few weeks later our Counter-Espionagè Service was able to identify the two women and organize a surveillance over their movements, prior to effecting their arrest.

I believe that the Nantes Court Martial condemned Julia to a few years' imprisonment. As for her sister, caught in the act at Toulouse, if I remember aright, she would certainly have been executed if she had not made a full confession. She not only admitted her employment, but she gave us details about the services of the Baron von Kolberg and furthermore denounced Marthe to us as being in his employ. Her sincerity, which we were in a position to verify, was what saved her.

If these two sisters are still alive to-day, they will probably be interested to learn how their arrest was brought about.

In the succinct report addressed to me on their subject, Marthe had mentioned that the elder of the sisters had wished to change the colour of her hair. The Baron had instructed the saleswoman to select the appropriate tint. But the Skylark, preparing the mixture with her own hands, had had a care to give it so violent a tone that Maria, as red with anger as with hair-dye, rushed to the shop next day in order to lodge an indignant protest.

Marthe was both penitent and charming to the utmost degree. There was no abject, and at the same time gracious, excuse which she did not coin, sprinkled generously with compliments. She would

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make atonement, of course; she must make atonement, she insisted. She herself would prepare a new mixture, the proper hue of which would be absolutely guaranteed. It would be delivered the same night at whatever address the good lady might indicate——

Marthe secured the address, and, armed with this first important piece of information, she told the Baroness all about it, begging the latter not to mention to the Baron the most unfortunate blunder over the hair-dye.

The Baroness von Kolberg thereupon innocently explained to Marthe the great importance of the part played by these two agents, mentioning that they were about to leave for France. Incidentally, the Baroness took Marthe once again under her special protection. For nothing in the world, she vowed, would she mention to the Baron this most deplorable affair, which would annoy him extremely because of the quality of his two clients.

And so we see, once again, how dangerous hair-dyes may be for the health of a woman, since one sister wound up in prison and the other escaped by a hair-breadth being haled before the firing-squad.

In the next chapter we shall take up another and more strictly domestic question, showing how it may be well for a cook to be able to distinguish between harmless and deadly mushrooms—especially when the cook is Marthe Richard.

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CHAPTER XI

EMILIO FUENTES

WHEN moving her possessions into the little *entresol*, Marthe had brought with them just a touch of the Bohemianism which is as dear to dreamers as it is to men and women of action. Both categories are bent so resolutely on their pursuit of an elusive goal, whether an ideal or riches, that they cannot but neglect the peaceful happiness made so readily available to us by a simple family life and a house in order.

Marthe had a faculty for curling up and making herself comfortable wherever she happened to settle down. She would then take little thought for whatever might occur in her immediate surroundings. And so the next caprice which caught her fancy would find her rested and ready to take wing once more, heading for new horizons and dangers not yet experienced.

In all this, Marthe was very modern, for the up-to-date woman has replaced old conceptions of sentiment and reason, the poetry of Alfred de Musset or the dry balancing of domestic accounts, by the thrill of an aeroplane or its equivalent.

On this particular afternoon, Marthe was stretched out on soft cushions in her little apartment. With dainty slippers on her feet, she wore a pale lemon-coloured deshabille bound at the waist by a broad glaring sash of sea-green silk.

"You are exquisite to-day, Marthe," the Baron declared. "Your sash and its contrast with your gown evoke to my mind the girdle of waves on the Atlantic shore," he added a moment later, in poetic vein.

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He was, as a matter of fact, seeking to divert her attention from certain grievances which had threatened trouble on several occasions during the last few days, and which he felt were not very far away just now.

She paid no heed whatever to his compliment. A silence of some minutes followed, which he dared not break, while she continued to smoke a rather strong Valencia cigarette, as though in a deliberate effort to fight off the cloying fumes of the Baron's big Havana cigar. The air hung heavy with smoke as with storm clouds, before Marthe's words came, in confirmation of the Baron's most sinister previsions:

"My dear Baron, I say once more, and for the last time, that things are going to spoil between us. I am bored, and you are making a nuisance of yourself."

"I gave you satisfaction in regard to this Institute which you so greatly desired," he protested.

"I wasn't cut out for the beauty parlour business," she retorted. "And besides, you haven't even the courage to employ me in it."

"You also have your other interests," the Baron said.

"Have I?" Marthe queried ironically. "I was about to mention that you furthermore lack the courage to avail yourself of my services for the international intrigues at which you yourself are such a poor hand. The plain fact is that there has been a misdeal all round, and it is best that we should recognize it and part company."

"But, Marthe——"

"Don't interrupt me. We must come to a perfectly clear understanding. I am aware that your official duties have nothing to do with the Institute of Beauty. You opened this shop only to be agreeable to me and also to divert the suspicions of the Baroness, while retrieving part of the expense of keeping me. That's true, is it not? And you must sometimes be at loggerheads over it, with your colleague of the Military Intelligence Service."

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" Who told you that ? " the Baron cried out.

" Who could have told me, since I know nobody ? " she countered. " But it is easy enough to guess, my dear. Whenever you have a conference with your colleague, Major von Strasse, you come back in a devilish temper, and afterwards you try to wall me up more narrowly than ever in my prison."

" Marthe ! Are you not entirely free to move about as you please ? "

" Oh, certainly ! The sort of ' liberty ' which you allow me is a pleasure indeed ! On the one hand I have the spectacles of Manuella focused on me as long as I am in the shop. On the other hand I have the inquisitorial eye of Isabel which searches me out in the remotest corners of the apartment. And as if all that were not enough, I have to reckon with the spies set on me by the Major, who are always following me in the street."

" Are you sure of what you are saying ? " the Baron asked, startled and indignant.

" We shall put it to the test whenever you wish," Marthe answered imperturbably. " Anyhow, though I may be a spy, I loathe being spied upon, and that is why I intend to give up the job."

By this time the Baron was worked up to a high state of nervous tension. But he was also deeply moved.

" Listen to me, Marthe," he pleaded earnestly. " When I brought you here, I swear that I had planned to associate you with me in my Service. But your marvellous instinct has guided you rightly in one respect. You had no sooner arrived, than insinuations emanating from one of my colleagues were uttered against me in high places. I was even ordered to leave you or else to move to another office, situated close to the Embassy, where I have since done my work and received my agents."

" And this apartment, then ? "

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" This apartment is merely reserved as a possible meeting-place which may be of use, owing to its separate entrances. As you may have noticed, I very rarely see anybody here. But, luckily, all that is to be changed before long. I beg you to have patience for just a few weeks. Great events are in preparation which will at last permit us to make an end to the war, now stagnating in the trenches. And the decisive battle will be won by the German Navy."

" You are going to win a victory, seated in an arm-chair in one of your two offices ? " Marthe asked sarcastically, seeing her chance to gather valuable information.

But he was on his guard :

" Do not question me further, my honour as a soldier is at stake. I am pledged to secrecy for the present. A few weeks from now you will see for yourself how von Strasse takes the news when he hears it ! Until then, patience and prudence must be the password."

" As they seem to have been for a long time past," Marthe interjected.

The Baron cast about for a change of subject.

" Oh ! " he exclaimed suddenly, " I almost forgot to tell you that to-morrow we must lunch late, not before 2 p.m. I am to receive here an important agent, one of my ' aces.' Since they have nobody like him in their Military Intelligence Service——"

" By the way," Marthe interrupted casually, " I suppose you have passed on to your military colleague all the information we receive from our aviator, Zozo ? "

" No fear ! " the Baron protested. " I telegraph it directly to the head-quarters of Admiral von Tirpitz."

" Good for you ! " Marthe approved. " I should be furious if my own agent proved to be of service to von Strasse. One of these days I shall make out an inventory of everything I have passed on to you, and we shall show it to him. That will be our revenge, for we have been getting some excellent stuff of late."

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Which was true, of course. We saw to that, in Paris—while also seeing to it that the information arrived systematically too late to do any harm to the Allies.

The Baron assented, in completely restored good-humour. But all Marthe's efforts to draw him once more, by a flank movement, into interesting admissions failed, and she finally desisted.

"I must be going," said the Baron presently. "I shall see you to-morrow. And remember, while my agent and I are in conference, we must not be disturbed on any account, no matter who wants to come in."

"Thank you very much," Marthe observed demurely. "Now I know what you really think of me."

"I don't mean that for you, of course," he protested gallantly.

"Oh, I have no wish to disturb you! You may depend on my discretion," Marthe answered with her most engaging smile.

She seemed now to be completely reconciled to the entire situation, and the Baron was delighted.

"Since you attach so very much importance to this, I shall be on duty and stand guard over the German Navy during your mysterious confabulation," she announced by way of farewell as he left.

Was it because of her self-appointed task with the German Navy, and to guard against sea-sickness on homœopathic principles, that Marthe profited by a moment of freedom, that afternoon, to enter a chemist's and buy a bottle of emetic? All that can be positively asserted is that she did so.

At eleven o'clock sharp, next day, she assumed her observation post beside the kitchen stove, waiting for things to happen.

They began presently, in the shape of a little man, rather elegantly dressed, who came rushing up the stairs. He wore a soft felt hat whose brim was turned down so as to cover his eyes, and he carried a bamboo cane which he twirled in his supple fingers

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Marthe was apparently absorbed in the preparation of the Baron's favourite dish, a mushroom *fondue*, which she always made with consummate art. She caught just a glimpse of the man, but was unable to discern his features as he flashed by.

The very instant he rang, Isabel went to admit him, being careful, however, to close the kitchen door behind her, as always.

The Baron, meanwhile, had hastened out to meet his agent, whom he promptly pushed into his private office.

"They will be at it for the next two hours at least," Marthe remarked complacently to the servant. "I shall certainly not wait until they have finished. My *fondue* is ready rather too soon, and I intend to eat my share at once. Would you like to taste some?"

Isabel was horrified at the suggestion.

"Never, never, señora!" she protested vehemently. "And I wish you would not touch them. You will both yet poison yourselves, eating those accursed mushrooms."

"You think so? Well, you are wrong! There's no danger at all," Marthe argued. "I picked them myself, last Sunday, in the Guadarrama Forest."

With that, she started to make a meal of her *cèpes à la crème.**

An hour passed and part of another, and the conference in the Baron's office had not yet ended.

Marthe was playing with Flot, to console him for some of his grievances. The chief of these was the Baron, of whom he was jealous, and who at times grew so cross that it would have seemed he was jealous of Flot. The second major grievance was the Baron's fox-terrier Jack, who hated Flot with a mighty hatred reciprocated in full measure by Flot, regardless of a decided inferiority in size and weight. So convinced was each of these dogs, indeed, that he could devour

* The *esculent boletus*.

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the other, that Jack had to be kept clear of the little apartment, where Flot was at home, and Flot was forbidden the use of the Baron's automobile, in which Jack properly belonged. That, indeed, formed Flot's third major grievance.

So, Marthe was playing with him, seeming to have no other preoccupation upon earth. Had not the Baron warned her that he would be very late for lunch?

But all of a sudden she began to feel queer.

"I don't know what can be the matter with me, Isabel," she said.

She put Flot on the floor, and got up as she spoke.

"The room is spinning round and round——" she began, but her voice died out.

As Isabel glanced up quickly, she saw her mistress change colour and totter as if about to fall.

"I fear I'm going to faint!" Marthe gasped. "Give me air, quick! Open the window on the street."

Isabel, all a-tremble, opened the window so as to let in a bare thread of air, as if fearing the effects of a chill.

"Wide, please!" Marthe pleaded. "This may pass off."

Isabel watched her uncertainly, not knowing what to do next.

A moment later, Marthe spoke again:

"What can be wrong? I don't feel any relief. It's as though I had swallowed fire——"

There was an agonized pause, before Marthe breathed:

"Could I have been poisoned?"

"Oh, señora—the mushrooms!" groaned Isabel. "I knew it! You weren't familiar with our Spanish mushrooms!"

"You are right!" Marthe returned faintly "Oh, Isabel, you don't know how I am suffering! It's more than I can bear. Can you do nothing for me?"

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But Isabel merely wrung her hands in helpless despair, and started praying.

"Call the Baron, then! He will know what to do!" Marthe commanded.

That roused Isabel to a sense of realities.

"I don't dare call him, señora!" she wailed. "He has forbidden anybody to disturb him, whatever may happen."

"You don't mean to stand there doing nothing, and refusing even to call anybody, while I die?" Marthe cried out desperately. "Call the Baron, I tell you!"

Still Isabel dared not move.

"You won't?" Marthe said. "Then I'll call him myself, but you must help me."

Leaning on the servant, who continued to protest tearfully, Marthe dragged herself feebly as far as von Kolberg's door, which she threw wide open.

She had just time to see the weasel eyes and the bilious complexion of the Baron's "ace," and also a large map stuck up against the wall. On the map, all the main French seaports were plainly visible, hemmed in by rows of little black flags suggesting a pirate fleet. Having duly noted all which, Marthe proceeded to collapse from sheer pain, writhing and speechless.

"The señora has eaten mushrooms!" Isabel lamented, in the midst of her violent sobs.

The two men caught the young woman as she fainted. They carried her as far as the bed in her room, and having stretched her out they consulted together anxiously, while Flot danced about in an agony of fear and complicated matters by snapping at the Baron's heels.

"Shall I run out and get a doctor?" the agent asked.

"No, no, I shall go myself," the Baron said, beside himself with concern. "Nobody but the Embassy physician must come here. This lady is one of our very best agents. I leave her in your care. Try to make her swallow a little milk."

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With that, the Baron rushed off on his errand, after roughly kicking Flot out of his way.

Isabel got some milk and, advised by the stranger, managed awkwardly to pour a few drops through the patient's tightly-locked teeth, while Flot, now crouching on the bed near his mistress, tried to serve her by scaring them both away.

A moment later, Marthe opened her eyes.

Making an effort which appeared to be all but superhuman, she succeeded in raising herself to a sitting position.

" I—I know what I must do," she gasped. " Help me to get up—yes, you must ! "

She spoke with such conviction that they instinctively obeyed ; besides, they were both completely at a loss, never having faced such an emergency before and realizing that they were responsible to the Baron for Marthe's welfare.

Slowly and cautiously, supported by her two volunteer nurses, she reached her travelling bag, and opened it. By a most fortunate coincidence, it contained a flask of emetic.

At a single draught she swallowed the contents, and asked to be helped to the bath-room.

When she reappeared a few minutes later, she was haggard and trembling, but she seemed to have found relief.

" The pain has subsided considerably," she remarked in a feeble voice. " Could you get me a little rum ? "

This being brought, she sipped it and revived to a certain degree. Her first thought then was to pour out a generous wineglassful for her gallant attendant.

" You must drink it to my health," she said to him with a wan smile. " May I ask to whom I am indebted for this timely and effective assistance ? "

" Emilio Fuentès, a lawyer of the Madrid bar," the stranger answered, only too eager to show every possible courtesy to the Baron's woman spy.

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" Baron von Kolberg has often spoken to me about you," she continued. " He tells me that, thanks to you, this abominable war will soon be over."

" The Baron is too kind. I have a great admiration for Germany, and I do what I can."

" You don't admire Germany more than I do ! " Marthe exclaimed. " And yet I am French. But the French executed someone who was very dear to me, and I want to avenge him."

" That will come very soon, with what is now in preparation."

" Oh, yes ! The Baron has often talked to me about that. The offensive will be launched very soon indeed, won't it ? "

" We are merely awaiting the order from Berlin——"

" Hush ! " Marthe interrupted. " I hear the Baron, and he would certainly scold us for having talked too much. Besides, all this has tired me exceedingly. I have not yet recovered my strength. Will you help me to lie down ? Thanks so much——"

Stretched out once more on her bed, Marthe closed her eyelids, which bore, with the help of kohl, all the signs of discoloration natural in her distressing condition.

The Baron arrived flanked by the physician to the German Embassy.

A superficial examination of the patient led the doctor to diagnose the case as mushroom poisoning He congratulated Marthe on her presence of mind in swallowing the emetic without loss of time, and he also approved the rum. He took his departure after writing out a harmless prescription.

The Baron was vastly relieved to know that the incident would lead to no serious consequences.

" Promise me, Marthe," he pleaded, " that you will never again eat any mushrooms ! "

" I don't know," she answered. " One may be

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very rash, at times, when one is very fond of a thing—or of a person——"

She clasped the Baron's hand as she broke off her sentence.

Von Kolberg was transported to the seventh heaven by the evidence she had given of her affection for him.

"As for me, I adore dandelions," Emilio observed prosaically, as he withdrew.

The Baron stayed beside her for quite a while, until he was completely reassured about her condition. She displayed great courage and exemplary sweetness, which touched the Baron so that he was even very kind to Flot, curled up beside Marthe on the couch.

When she was alone once more, Marthe's thoughts reverted to Emilio and what she had discovered that day. By linking up the few words spoken by Fuentès, with the indiscretions committed the day before by the Baron himself in his dismay at the scene she had provoked, she was able to understand very clearly what was in preparation.

"Poor devil," she reflected, her thoughts reverting to Emilio Fuentès and his approaching mission to France. "He will soon be getting his fill of dandelions."

She closed her eyes for a moment, while before her flashed a vision of the dramatic close which would come to his adventurous career.

Then another vision, a grim spectre from her past, drove away her depression, reducing her to a mood of stern fierceness.

"So much the worse for him," she concluded. "This is war."

* * * * *

The information which presently reached us in Paris, coming from Madrid, cast a new and striking light on a problem whose solution we had been seeking for many weeks.

We had noted the name of Emilio Fuentès recurring

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constantly in the radiograms sent out by von Kolberg and intercepted by the Eiffel Tower. It is unfortunately no longer a secret that our decoding services readily deciphered all such messages.

Accordingly, we had sought in all the seaports of France for the Baron's chief agent, who kept busy watching the sailings of ships and reporting their names and their destinations.

But he used for this purpose a code which we had been totally unable to decipher. We knew only later that it was the commercial code of a sardine merchant, in which business Fuentès was genuinely engaged.

A former lawyer with a brilliant record at the Madrid bar, gambling and women had led him to connect first with the British Intelligence Service, which had employed him prior to the outbreak of the war and until the period of the earliest battles.

Even his own declarations did not succeed in explaining to us, eventually, just how he had happened to pass into the service of Germany. It is certain that, having become one of their naval agents, he sent from Hamburg false reports addressed to the British Admiralty. The latter soon detected the fraud and ceased having any dealings with him. The German Naval Head-quarters had thereupon put him at the disposal of von Kolberg, who had sent him to France.

For months he had been moving about at liberty among us, acting with complete immunity on the strength of a forged passport and other papers, as well as a regularly organized business. He was thus able to send genuine commercial orders which were strictly executed, the goods being delivered as specified.

This was the situation which we were at last able to explain, as soon as Marthe's report reached us.

A full description of Emilio Fuentès was immediately telegraphed by us to all the French seaports. But the thirst for pleasure had lured him to Paris, and that is

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where he was arrested, thanks to the meticulous care with which the individual surveillance service was run by our agents.

In the course of his first interrogatories, Fuentès denied everything, even in the face of the direct evidence which we produced. Gradually, however, as he felt the net tighten inexorably round him, he began to make avowals under the merciless fire of logical questions aimed at him by the wise commissioner of police in charge of his case.

Detail by detail, his whole career was then reconstructed ; and by applying to the British Intelligence Service, we secured from their naval authorities confirmation of the fact that he had betrayed them before coming to operate among us in France.

I myself asked to see him. This was an unusual proceeding on my part, for my connexion with a case ceased on the day when I had placed the culprit at the disposal of justice.

As a rule, it sufficed for me to receive the very detailed and complete reports which Priolet sent to us at the close of the interrogatories he conducted. He was thoroughly familiar with the German spying methods, and he would put at our disposal everything he managed to extract in the way of information from their agents.

I believe, indeed, that I got in direct touch with no spies at all, except Fuentès and Mata-Hari ; and as for the latter, she herself specially asked to see me subsequent to her arrest.

It was not mere curiosity which caused me to depart from my usual policy by asking to see Fuentès. I had reflected that since he enjoyed the full confidence of Baron von Kolberg, he might be able to give us additional information about the famous secret ink which filled the bottle of " Unguleum " sent to us by Marthe.

Our special services in Lyons had analysed the

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contents so as to determine its exact nature, but had not found the way to use it, nor the reagent which would reveal it. In spite of all our experiments operated ceaselessly on letters and newspapers in transit from Spain to Switzerland, bearing double postage as Marthe had warned us that they would, we had remained in the dark.

I have retained a very painful memory of the grilling I gave Fuentès. The poor devil knew he was lost, and sweated out his admissions drop by drop, so to speak.

Not being able to elicit from him just what I sought, I thought of asking him to describe to me all the articles on the Baron's official desk. So he came in due turn to what he called solutions used for photographs, which he enumerated as a flask bearing a label marked with an S (this was the Unguleum), and a bottle of hyposulphite.

These indications were immediately forwarded by me to Lyons. A few days later, Landru sent me a report, which he had first jotted down in the form of a rough draft. This draft, which I have now secured from him, reads as follows:

"On the strength of indications received from the Fifth Bureau, we passed the most varied reagents over the wrappers and the newspapers sent from Spain to Switzerland and bearing double postage. All our researches led to no result other than to cause a brown and evenly distributed coloration to appear, beneath which no letters or figures were discernible.

"Profiting by the further information you have just sent us, it occurred to me that the letter S might stand for salt of silver (*Silber*), and that the liquid thus designated might very possibly be revealed like a photograph.

"This was a complete failure, my papers turned to a brownish red without any traces of writing

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"I next thought of employing a physical reagent made by Lumière on the basis of bromide of silver. This provoked the precipitation of mercury at the nascent stage.

"After the lapse of a quarter of an hour which seemed endless to me, the greyish coloration which appeared allowed the appended document to be revealed.

"The hyposulphite must be employed by the Germans for isolating their secret writing. It is protected in this way from our iodine systems of revelation. This explains why for so long we had been able to discover nothing."

As for the document which had been successfully revealed, and which was appended to the report of the young chemist, it contained nothing less than the description of the string of mines with which the submarines, commanded by Baron von Kolberg from his post in Madrid, had surrounded one of our chief commercial ports.

And so the little black flags which Marthe had just had time to distinguish on the big map in the Baron's office, as she staggered feebly in for the purpose of breaking up his conference with Emilio Fuentès, had indeed been symbolical of pirates.

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CHAPTER XII

HOW MARTHE CELEBRATED CHRISTMAS EVE

THE Secret War is not a question of pure technique, any more than the battles fought under the open sky.

What Bismarck, a past master of such things, called " imponderables " must also be taken into consideration. By choosing this particular word, he may have wished to signify that he had always neglected to attach any weight to them.

" War is not waged with formulas but with men," my old chief, Joffre, had said to me.

I think he might have added :

" Or with women."

Marthe Richard was not, like the victor of the Marne, a graduate of the École Polytechnique. She would not have known how to draw up a line of battle on land or on sea against von Strasse or von Kolberg, both of whom had come out at the head of their classes from the Berlin academies.

It is furthermore likely that she had not even read Stendhal. It was probably as a matter of sheer instinct that she was able to apply the practical aphorism which the trenchant creator of the analytical novel introduced into his physiology of Love,* as the *vade mecum* of Hussar officers in the field.

" I have observed," he remarks, " that in the presence of two sisters, if one wishes to please either it is necessary to pay court to the other."

Caught between von Kolberg and von Strasse,

* " De l'Amour."

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Marthe resorted to Stendhalian tactics, without knowing it, on Christmas Eve in the year 1916.

In accordance with the old Castilian custom, the time immediately following the dinner-hour on December 24 was devoted in Madrid to the traditional sale of turkeys, attended by the most fashionable society, on the Plaza de Santa Cruz.

Accompanied by von Kolberg, Marthe and Flot too had joined with the crowd which filled the streets, forming in *farandula* to the sound of the noisy Spanish tambourines, the *tamboras*.

Then she went back to her rooms, and prepared herself for the real events of the night.

At an hour when other women were taking no thought but for their dress and appearance, Marthe, having finished her toilet, opened a secret drawer in her dressing-table and took out a small package of letters which she started to sort and to re-read.

Next she selected a particularly large sheet of parchment paper, with the heading of the "Miroir aux Alouettes." She carefully copied thereon, in chronological order, a portion of the text of each letter which appeared in greyish characters between the lines written plainly in ink. Then she restored the letters to their hiding-place, and folding the sheet of paper on which she had made her transcription, she stowed it safely away in her bodice.

She was now ready for the Christmas Eve festivities.

Count von Strasse, whom she was to meet at the party, as she well knew, was what is called a fine-looking soldier. Tall and strongly-built, yet graceful in bearing, he had become popular in Madrid society, what with the advantages he enjoyed in being an officer of the Imperial Guard who furthermore possessed the talents of a pleasant and cultured conversationalist.

His success had been very marked with the fair sex, and it was said that he had won over to the cause of the Central Empires a considerable number of our

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Latin sisters, with whom the French Government had not thought of accrediting so persuasive a type of propaganda agent.

Now it had for some time past been evident to Marthe that von Kolberg, brilliantly gifted himself, was secretly jealous of the greater prestige enjoyed among women by his colleague of the Espionage service. She attributed largely to this sentiment the display which the Baron chose to make of her, driving with her at his side in the "Parque" on fine winter mornings.

Even in the midst of the highly exclusive throng frequenting the "Paseo del Duque Fernan Nuñez," which is for Madrid what the "Sentier de la Vertu" is in the Bois de Boulogne, Marthe never failed to attract attention.

One day, their car was crossed by the car of the Count von Strasse, who made a low bow in their direction, but remarked to his fair companion in a tone not so low but the Baron might overhear:

"That little woman is delightful. She really deserved better——"

Marthe, too, had heard and had vowed to remember.

Her preparations being completed, she tucked Flot in his basket for the night, and called for the *coupé* put at her disposal by von Kolberg for her drives or errands.

She reached the Palace Hotel soon after midnight.

Von Kolberg had warned her not to expect him before 2 a.m., his wife having invited to dinner some German notables, including von Strasse, who could not be left to dine alone as a bachelor.

"All right," Marthe had replied. "I shall have no difficulty in finding a partner while waiting for you."

She knew very well that one was ready and waiting for her, a young attaché of the British Embassy who had only recently arrived in Madrid.

He had been in command of a submarine chaser, when in the course of an engagement he had been badly wounded by a bit of shell, so that he had been

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given a diplomatic assignment. He had noticed Marthe on a number of occasions. Indeed, she found him constantly near her when she went for a walk in the " Parque " or, on her return, strolled in for tea at the Palace Hotel.

As the peerless Pedroso advanced to know her wishes, she said with seeming indifference, but very low so that nobody should overhear :

" Get me a table near the English officer."

Pedroso manœuvred so successfully that the edges of the two tables were all but touching.

Marthe's impassiveness had always been one of her qualities which exercised the very strongest hold on the men she met. Sometimes it acted without her knowledge, as it had done with von Kolberg, and indeed as I had calculated that it would, from what I had seen of her. But she had the far rarer gift of being able to affect exactly the same impassiveness in moments when her senses were most keenly on the alert. Her fascination was perhaps stronger then than when her unconsciousness entered into play.

She had not been very long at the table selected and placed specially for her by Pedroso, before she fell into conversation with her neighbour, as was only natural for two solitary people whom a friendly chance had thus brought side by side on such a night.

The young officer, attracted irresistibly, turned, settling at his ease so that his wooden leg came between his chair and the one occupied by Marthe.

" Lieutenant Stinton, R.N.," he introduced himself.

" The Germans are responsible for that ? " Marthe asked, nodding at his leg.

" Yes, your good friends the Germans," Stinton answered with a laugh.

Marthe recalled that a number of times, when he had met her, she had been in the company of von Kolberg, who was a familiar figure to him.

She said to herself :

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" He's clever. Instead of trying to bluff me, he shows his hand at once so as to compel me to lay down my cards. But he hasn't won yet."

Then she addressed him with a smile.

" I knew the Baron in Switzerland before the war," she said, half apologetically. " When he learned that I had opened my little Institute of Beauty near the Alcalá, he called on me. I had no reason for rejecting so good a client."

" Do you regard him as a desirable advertisement for your establishment ? " the Englishman asked with the impertinence of youth.

" In my line of business, the ugliest people turn out to be the best customers," Marthe replied.

She paused for an instant, before adding :

" Perhaps that is why I never see you in my shop."

" There is a better reason," Stinton returned. " I can assure you that it would be difficult for an officer in His Majesty's service to go—— How can I say it without offending you ? "

" Say what ? " Marthe asked curiously.

" Well ! Let's put it this way : an officer in His Majesty's service ought not to get himself caught in a Lark-Trap."

Marthe seemed neither surprised nor offended ; she merely became a little more distant.

He hesitated a moment or two, before adding :

" That is, unless——"

" Unless what ? " Marthe inquired, sinking her voice.

" Unless," Stinton answered, modulating his voice like hers, " he went as a matter of duty."

" Ah, you are all alike in your profession ! " she exclaimed, so as to leave no doubt in his mind as to the fact that she had perfectly understood.

But she dropped her distant air as she continued chattily :

" For you gentlemen engaged in the Intelligence Services, whether British or French, German or

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Turkish, women no longer matter, except to serve as birds of prey like those which our ancestors bore on their wrists. The gerfalcons were set on the unfortunate hare which the hounds had raised—and the bird's mission was to blind the hare. Have you then no other thoughts than to make spies of us all ? "

" As for me," said the young officer, " I shall certainly think of nothing else until the Germans give me back my leg."

Then, as if to relieve the sadness which this remark had introduced amid the surrounding gaiety, he added :

" How could I not have a grudge against them, when through their fault I can't ask you to dance with me to-night ? "

Marthe had successfully deflected the conversation, when again his tone suddenly grew bitter as he said :

" Here is one of them coming to invite you in my stead."

A man whose approach had not been noticed by Marthe stood at her side.

" Madame, will you give me this fox-trot ? " asked Count von Strasse, with a bow.

It was Marthe's turn to hesitate for an instant. She knew that her original partner would be deeply disappointed. And she could not have denied her own disappointment, too.

She wanted to know this youth better ; she was conscious that they might be extremely useful to each other, even though she might not dare make her real sentiments known to him. Major von Strasse had, however, infinitely greater importance in her game ; and he was providing her with the opportunity she had desired. If she could not make a friend of him, she must at least disarm this formidable enemy.

So she got up, saying simply, as the Count bore her away on his stalwart arm :

" Excuse me, please."

She would have given a great deal to look back and see

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how Stinton accepted her desertion. But she dared not.

"Pardon me if I seemed indiscreet in coming up and interrupting your conversation," Major von Strasse said. "But our friend von Kolberg sent me to warn you that the man with whom you were flirting is an agent of the British Intelligence Service."

"You may thank the Baron for his kind solicitude," Marthe replied. "But please add for his information that I knew the man with whom I was dealing."

"That's a dangerous game," von Strasse commented. "Stinton is considered a very astute youth."

"Dangerous for whom?" Marthe demanded promptly. "For the Baron, who is jealous? Or for you—who are not, I should fancy?"

"Possibly dangerous for both."

Instead of answering, Marthe rested rather closer against her partner as they danced. Then suddenly, without transition, she suggested:

"Shall we sit down for a few moments in the little blue salon, which I see is unoccupied?"

"With utmost pleasure," replied von Strasse, who asked no better than to have at last an opportunity for sounding this enigmatical woman.

But he hesitated, saying:

"Perhaps it would be well for me to mention to von Kolberg that I have taken you away from your dangerous neighbour. Otherwise he might fail to understand——"

"Don't trouble," Marthe returned coolly. "I need nobody to defend me."

As she spoke, she settled down in an arm-chair and lighted a cigarette.

Having committed this flagrant violation of Spanish usages, which at that period forbade women to smoke in public, Marthe resumed, as von Strasse had remained silent:

"Most particularly I feel no need to be protected

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by you, my dear Count. You have never ceased attacking me since I first came to Madrid."

"Did von Kolberg tell you that?" he demanded sharply.

"No. It is I who told von Kolberg."

"I am curious to know how you learned it."

"Is it not the duty of a really good spy to know everything?"

"Manifestly, there are moments when a woman can ask anything," was his scathing rejoinder.

But he was no match for Marthe.

"Indeed!" she exclaimed. "But was the Baron present when you intimated to the Prince that von Kolberg was financing me with the secret funds reserved for the uses of the service?"

"No!" von Strasse exclaimed, now put fully on his guard. "I was alone with the Prince at the time."

"And so——?"

"And so, madame, permit me to warn you once more that you are playing a very dangerous game."

"You are not the first to tell me so. I have already heard the tale of the Spanish woman at Bilbao."

"Even that did not suffice to teach you prudence?"

Instead of replying, Marthe asked suddenly:

"Tell me, Count, why you were given the Iron Cross? I was under the impression that, like the French Croix de Guerre, the German Iron Cross was given only to those who had been in the firing line. Does it then mean that there is really some risk connected with our profession?"

At these words the Count grew livid. But he was certainly no more astonished than I myself when later Marthe repeated this conversation to me. For she was not in a position to know the inside story of that cross, which had, however, reached my ears.

A few days before Christmas our decoding service had sent me copies of telegrams exchanged between Count von Strasse and the German G.H.Q. They were

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highly significant as revealing both the resolute character of this officer and the high esteem in which Germany always held the chiefs of her Intelligence Service.

Von Strasse had telegraphed substantially as follows to his immediate superior :

> I am surprised to learn that I am not included in the latest list of promotions for the rank of lieutenant-colonel. I nevertheless have reason to believe that since the outbreak of hostilities I have rendered such services to my country that I deserve this recognition. Your Excellency seems to feel some doubt on this point. I therefore ask to be immediately relieved of my duties and authorized to embark in the first available submarine so that I may take a command at the front.

Two days later the German G.H.Q. replied :

> His Majesty confers on you the Iron Cross of the First Class for exceptional services. You will be included in the next list of promotions. I send you my personal congratulations.—LUDENDORFF.

Major Count von Strasse is probably to-day a General of Infantry, the highest grade in the German Army. And if I am correctly informed, he is even in charge of relations between the Reichswehr and the Press. Such functions would seem to indicate that he has become the veritable head of the German Intelligence Services.

Perhaps my successors in office would do well to bear this in mind, for he is a man of unusual character and ability, thoroughly familiar with all the tricks of the trade.

But we have left him in the midst of a private conversation with Marthe and considerably embarrassed for a reply, after the two direct thrusts she had just dealt him.

He observed her for some instants, and then decided to attack in turn.

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" If I was decorated, madame," he said, " it was for defending my country."

Marthe lowered her fan, so that her radiant smile should not in any way be lost as she countered :

" Do you mean to reproach me with betraying my own country ? "

" I do not know as yet whether you are defending or betraying it," Count von Strasse said. " But what I can declare, madame, on my honour as a man who knows his subject, is that you are a keen blade."

" So are you, Count. And in order that we may not risk putting out each other's eyes playing with such dangerous weapons, I propose a truce."

" Granted."

" Now that you are making yourself agreeable once more, I shall try to be nice to you. Would you be so good as to read this ? "

She drew out from her bodice and handed to him the paper she had prepared before coming to the Palace Hotel.

It was a detailed list of the military information she had supplied to von Kolberg since her arrival in Madrid.

All the particulars given were true at the date on which Marthe's " double," Zozo the aviator, had received them from the Fifth Bureau for the express purpose of transmitting them. Needless to add, by the time the Baron was in a position to forward them to German Naval Head-quarters, they had ceased to be true and could serve no further purpose than to establish the accuracy of the agent who supplied them.

The documentary value of the facts bearing upon the most recent months of the war was nevertheless exceptionally great for an officer like von Strasse, who had at his finger-tips a complete knowledge of the front.

" What ! " he cried. " Von Kolberg receives information like this and does not pass it on to me ? "

" Perhaps he forgot," Marthe suggested, with the most innocent air in the world.

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"But he has committed a very grave military fault," the Count continued irritably. "I give him all the naval information which I gather."

"Yes, and I understand that it is only so-so."

"He told you that?"

"Oh, no! But when he compares what you give him with what I give him, he invariably exclaims: 'Poor old von Strasse! He is sadly taken in by his agents.'"

The shot went home. Von Strasse, in his surprise and mortification, did not find a word to say.

From behind her fan, Marthe had been watching the effects of her fire, as she would have looked above the turning propeller of her plane to gauge the range of her machine-gun. She took note that every bullet had carried.

"And now you have learned to know this woman—what's her name?—whom Somebody denounced to his Ambassador," she simpered in exaggerated style as conclusion.

"Do you authorize me to make von Kolberg account to me for this?" von Strasse demanded.

"Why, certainly, my dear Count. Hold him responsible by asking anything you please. You will get me in for a scolding, but I'm used to that."

"He is an awful bore, isn't he?" von Strasse asked quickly.

"Worse than that, he is in love," she said, rising as she delivered this broadside.

"I wonder what my young Englishman has been doing all this while?" she asked presently. "I had already succeeded in making him tell me how the British Admiralty soon hoped to eliminate the disastrous consequences of your submarine warfare——"

"He told you that?"

"Yes, but it is naval, and so it does not concern you. You must leave me at least something with which to buy the Baron's forgiveness for having told you the truth."

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"You are indeed a devil, and you get the better of everybody who comes near you!" the Count protested.

"Only a double, my dear Count—I am a double-agent."

"And yet you are at bottom a very simple little woman."

"Shall we meet again?"

"Yes, at the beauty parlour, when von Kolberg is at his office—the one which he had to take because of you, so as to get away from his faithful woman agent. And now send the Baron to me quickly, because of the Englishman," Marthe concluded, letting the Major take the tips of her fingers, which he kissed.

But when she returned to her original place, Stinton had already gone.

Pedroso drew near and bowed in his most ceremonial style.

"Madame," he said, handing her an envelope, "Lieutenant Stinton told me to give you this."

She took the letter and opened it. Inside were a thousand-peseta note and the visiting-card of Lieutenant Stinton, R.N., engraved with the notification that he received every evening from 10 p.m. to midnight on service matters only, at No. 43, Calle Matador. On this card he had scribbled a message which stung like a lash:

"I did not dare to pay for your supper in your absence, but I beg you to consent to pay for it yourself."

Marthe did not turn a hair, but when she had finished reading she put her upturned nose in the air.

"Oh, there is the Baron signalling to me!" she commented inwardly. "The cloth is well cut, now for the stitching."

Aloud she said:

"I must join the Baron, Pedroso. Will you settle the bill?"

She put the thousand-peseta note in the hand of her comrade-in-arms as she slipped on her cloak.

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" At least, the money will remain in the family," she reflected.

One hour later, the little Skylark, having succeeded like the naughty gerfalcon in blinding her victims, pursued her victory by maddening the Baron with professional and amorous jealousy. And so presently she drew from him the confidences for which she had worked so hard and so long, and which rounded off the knowledge she had been gathering piece by piece.

" Neither your Englishman nor your Count will be able to do anything about it, no matter how they may brag to you," he stormed. " The German Navy will win the war. One month from now, in addition to the hundred and fifty submarines at present in commission, we shall have fifty more belonging to a new series and capable of remaining at sea for several months. They will break through the blockade and save Germany."

* * * * *

When I was informed by Marthe of this crucial development, I made out a full report which I myself took to the Ministry of Marine.

My announcement was received with a discreet and non-committal smile.

A few hours later, the *liaison* officer of the British Navy, receiving the same report from the hands of one of my officers, commented with truly British coolness :

" I think that makes a great many boats."

At the end of February, some tens of thousands of tons of Allied shipping had already been sent to the bottom, and these were to be followed by more.

From the above episode, a general rule may be deduced, which is well worth bearing in mind :

" No Intelligence Service ever believes the information emanating from another Intelligence Service."

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CHAPTER XIII

THE NUREMBERG TOYS

REPLYING to the letter in which Marthe told me of the most recent confidences she had wrested from the Baron, between the two fits of rage she had aroused in him, one against the young Englishman and the other against his own colleague von Strasse, I wrote :

" At the stage we have now reached, your entire attention must be concentrated on von Kolberg.

" If, as you suppose and I believe, the opening months of the year 1916 are to be marked by a colossal effort of the Germans to break through the blockade which is stifling them, the Baron will play the leading part on the Spanish stage.

" Try to manage so that you may accompany him on his visits to the coast.

" Try to make contact again with Halphan, who is chief of the important Bilbao sector.

" But get rid of von Strasse without losing a moment. Dealing with an adversary in such a class, it is wiser for you to rest on your initial success."

Marthe had not waited to receive this last piece of advice. Her own sound instinct had prompted her to follow exactly the line of conduct I traced for her.

When the Count presented himself on Christmas Day at the beauty parlour, Manuella announced that " the Frenchwoman " had gone out, leaving a note for him. His hands quivered nervously as he tore it open. What he read was simply this :

" All ' military ' information will henceforth be

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passed on to you. As for the rest, you will doubtless realize that it is best for matters to remain at the exact point where good old Santa Claus so providentially called a halt."

As to the first of my suggestions, it had always been Marthe's greatest desire to follow the Baron whenever he went on his tours of inspection to the sea-coast.

She was methodically shaping her plans to this end, when an unforeseen event compelled her to forgo the pleasure while modifying her prospects and my instructions. Thus she learned once more that it was in vain one might seek prematurely to mould the course of events, or to intervene from a distance in a corner of a battle-field where the situation changes from hour to hour. Only those in the midst of the fray can reach opportune decisions.

At the very period when I was shaping my plans for the Secret War so as to offset the effects of the submarine offensive, which had been launched early in February, 1917, exactly as Marthe had warned us that it would, a new method of warfare was about to be inaugurated. We had not foreseen it any more than we had been prepared for the gas attacks in the spring of 1915.

The Germans realized that our war manufactories, which were already supplying a part of the British Front, would facilitate America's entrance into the fray at a not very remote date. They had accordingly planned a formidable attack against our various manufacturing centres.

Perhaps I may some day be able to tell how this new initiative of our adversaries, whose activity was ever on the alert, came to be revealed to us in all its bearings. What I am free to say here is that if we escaped this grave danger, it was owing to the quick intelligence of Captain P——, an officer attached to the Fifth Bureau, and the fertile imagination of one of the best agents serving under him.

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But the first inkling of what was in preparation came from Marthe, to whose presence of mind we owed the warning which put us on our guard.

Shortly after the New Year, somebody rang at the door of Marthe's apartment, one day, when she was alone there. She herself went to answer the bell.

A stranger stood in the outer hall, and entered without speaking as soon as the door was opened. He had every appearance of being expected. Yet he took the precaution of inquiring whether this was the office of the Baron von Kolberg.

Upon receiving from Marthe the assurance that it was, he put down in the anteroom a wooden case marked in German *gerbrechlich*—" fragile." He then retired precipitately without uttering another word.

Curiosity led Marthe to examine the case closely. It bore a label emanating from a toy manufactory in Nuremberg.

" So the Baron is having toys sent to him," she reflected. " What if I opened the box ? "

She recalled, however, that the man had been very slow and cautious in all his movements until he had got rid of the case, and particularly while he was setting it on the floor. Yet as soon as he had so disposed of it, he had all but run out of the apartment.

Impressed by this sequence of facts, Marthe looked again before getting a hammer and chisel. So she came to observe that the word *Gefahr*—" Danger "—was stencilled in red letters, twice over, immediately above the label.

" It may be an infernal machine," Marthe thought.

She no longer wanted to open it, now, even though her curiosity was increased. The question was, what she could do with the thing. It would never do to let the case remain here, where anybody might see it on entering—or kick it in passing.

The solution she found consisted in pushing it very gently under the sofa in the Baron's own office.

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He himself arrived a few minutes later, all out of breath.

"Has nothing come for me?" he asked at once.

"Yes, a lot of bombs," Marthe replied imperturbably. "I put them in your own room, so that you may be the very first to enjoy them. Unless it's a New Year's present you are receiving rather late, owing to inevitable delays in railway connexions between Madrid and the Black Forest?"

"I'm immensely relieved to know the case is here," von Kolberg said. "Just fancy, it was first delivered at my home, where my wife refused to allow it to be carried in. She gave orders for it to be brought here."

"Please be sure to thank her for her kind attention!" Marthe exclaimed in a burst of laughter. "I have been giving it the most affectionate care. But what can the contents be?"

"One of the very latest inventions of our scientists," the Baron answered.

"For the benefit of Spain?" Marthe inquired nonchalantly. "That's odd. Unless it's a reward for being good neutrals?"

"Oh, no!" the Baron returned, amused by her idea. "It is for a better purpose than that. You will be interested to learn that your French friends are intended to benefit by it."

"Do you plan to have it delivered by aeroplane?" Marthe asked, as if his statement were the most natural thing in the world.

"By aeroplane—that's not a bad idea you are giving me there, it hadn't occurred to me," said the Baron. "I have been greatly puzzled to know how I could have the case delivered free of charge at its destination."

"Give me a plane and a hundred thousand pesetas, and I'll do the job!" Marthe declared coolly.

"You are mad!" the Baron protested. "I could never dream of allowing you to run such risks. But

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your idea is good, as an idea. For the Spanish frontier has been more closely watched than ever, of late."

"And your famous frontier agents?" Marthe asked tauntingly. "I thought they could get anything across, as the French were not clever enough to catch them."

"We have in our pay a few trustworthy men who are accustomed to contraband traffic over the mountain paths, it is true," the Baron admitted. "Nevertheless, a package of this size is hard to get away with."

"Well! Even though you won't avail yourself of my services, there's a way to ship your goods, and to make sure of their delivery, too. All you need is a French aviator, and you know we have one at our disposal."

The Baron, without rejecting her proposition, stopped to meditate on it, and it was her policy never to let him think too much. She spoke again, quickly:

"You see, Zozo being my fiancé——"

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the astonished Baron.

"Didn't I ever mention it? Why, if he weren't, I couldn't absolutely trust him as I do. And I'd like to see him again. If he doesn't come very soon on one pretext or another, I really must go back to France, that's all, because I miss him very much."

She paused to allow time for the Baron to grow accustomed to this new fiancé whom she was spontaneously attributing to herself.

"I'd like to have a look at this fiancé of yours," he growled. "After all, I ought to know the man I'm dealing with. So far, I've had to accept him on your say-so."

Her mind working with the swiftness of conception which characterized her, Marthe followed up this first advantage:

"I read yesterday in the *Heraldo* that there is to be a

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big aviation festival at Barcelona, for the benefit of the Red Cross. The benefit of the French Red Cross," she repeated explicitly.

" And what of it ? " asked the Baron.

" Shall I try to get Zozo to come in time for that ? If he can manage it, you will be given an excellent opportunity not only to meet him, but also to thank him for what he has done for you. That would be so much to the good. Then we could try to organize with his help the operation concerning that case of yours. At all events, I shall send him our address in Barcelona. If he can't come, we shall readily find somebody to take his place. One way or the other, I'm going to Barcelona with you."

Von Kolberg was a thoroughly trained sailor ; he never wasted time in tacking when he judged the wind to be favourable.

" All right," he said promptly. " Your plan is particularly good, in view of the fact that one of our very best lieutenants is stationed in Barcelona. He has at his disposal a perfectly organized service. He will make all the necessary arrangements for meeting the plane when it lands in France, and for receiving the box. The more I think of your scheme, the more excellent it appears. Write to your friend, by all means."

Complying with this express instruction, Marthe wrote that very night to my address in the Rue Jacob, giving me the fullest details of her conversation with von Kolberg. After setting forth her plan, she added :

" Perhaps we may kill two birds with one stone, so to speak. I shall try to bring you the Baron himself by aeroplane, along with his box. The time is short, however, and you must act promptly. The festival at Barcelona is to take place early next week."

The time limit was, indeed, hopelessly short. By an unfortunate coincidence, the arrival of Marthe's letter was delayed far more than would ordinarily

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have been the case. For the French G.H.Q. had just ordered along the entire Pyrenean frontier an experiment at hermetic closing, as we had been doing periodically with Switzerland.

All mail was accordingly stopped. And the event at Barcelona was already a thing of the past when Marthe's audacious project became known to me through her letter.

Nevertheless, left to the resources of her own genius, she made the best of her opportunities. The arrival of von Kolberg on French soil was adjourned for the time being, but one of the best secret channels possessed by Germany for communicating with France across the Spanish frontier was revealed to us in the sequel.

When she arrived in Barcelona in company with Baron von Kolberg, Marthe found the moral atmosphere there to be entirely different from what she had experienced in Madrid.

Closely linked with French Catalonia, the native province of Joffre, Spanish Catalonia has a heart that beats and a mind that thinks very much in unison with France. The Skylark and the Baron accordingly reacted strongly, almost violently, though in contrary directions, amid these new surroundings.

The immediate neighbourhood of her own soil, whose air she all but breathed, filled Marthe with the ardour of battle. Her wings quivered with eagerness to take flight once more, violating the prohibition put upon her flying by the military authorities at the outbreak of the war.

The Baron, on the other hand, aware of the sullen hostility which reigned among the Catalonians who surrounded him on all sides, sought cover. He made an established rule of waiting for the night, to hold conferences with his lieutenant in charge of the Eastern Sector. This officer was a Rhenish baron, named von Ronceval, who filled the dual functions of chief of the

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German recruiting office for secret agents and chief of the Military and Naval Intelligence Services in Barcelona.

Marthe had no sooner settled down with the Baron at the Hotel d'Angleterre, than she got to work. First she succeeded through a French friend, Madame P——, in making contact with a well-known Spanish aviator named Sevilla. Next she managed to make the acquaintance of Ferrero, one of the most prominent members of the Aero Club and a man noted for his Francophilia.

The Baron and she finding it mutually to their interest to avoid attracting attention together in public, Marthe agreed with him that they should meet only at the hotel every evening.

Her activities were concentrated at first on efforts to delay the opening of the festival as far as possible, so as to allow ample time for the arrival of her friend and alleged fiancé, Zozo the French aviator.

At last the meet was announced by the Barcelona Press, early in March, 1917. Much was made of the presence of the famous French airwoman who held the women's records for both speed and endurance. One of the articles which appeared ran thus:

AVIATION CHARITY FESTIVAL

Madame Richard, coming from France, her native country, has been in Barcelona since yesterday.

This famous airwoman, whose name is frequently mentioned in the Press and always with eulogy, holds the speed, endurance, and altitude records for French airwomen.

She intends to remain for a while in Barcelona, and she will take advantage of her visit here to participate, together with a number of Spanish flyers, in a grand Air Pageant for the benefit of the French Red Cross.

The splendid Caudron aeroplane, engine Le Rhône

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80 h.p., which the intrepid airwoman pilots, is in the hangar at Cervera.

We send her our cheers of welcome.

But Marthe's comrade-in-arms did not arrive, for the reason I have already explained. Von Kolberg, overjoyed at the skill and the activity with which she had conducted her publicity campaign and paved the way for the transportation of his material, was on tenter-hooks to an even greater degree than Marthe, as they waited vainly for news of the young aviator.

The festival took place, Marthe attending only as a spectator. The preparations made for the expedition had to be cancelled. She was furious, but did not long waste her energy in mere emotion. Her quick brain was already at work on a new plan.

It will be recalled that the Baron had mentioned to her the devoted smugglers he had in his service, and the absolutely safe mountain passes through which they operated. The least of things was for her to get to know these. So she teased and harassed von Kolberg into consenting to a new scheme which she proceeded to spring on him.

This consisted in entrusting to her a few of his explosive or incendiary engines. She was then to be put, with her small but highly dangerous load, in the charge of an agent attached to Lieutenant von Ronceval. They were to cross the mountains together, and reaching France without having passed through the customs, she was to proceed immediately to Paris. There she was to find some pretext for calling at the offices of the Fifth Bureau in order to communicate the information specially given to her for this purpose by the Baron. Finally, she would arrange to rejoin her aviator, Zozo, who luckily was at that very time stationed in a bombing aeroplane camp, and she would turn over to him the samples of German "toys."

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He would then try them out on the spot and demonstrate just how much damage they were capable of doing.

Such was the scheme to which Marthe won the Baron's consent.

He put into her willing hands two little marvels of mechanical ingeniousness.

One was an alarm-clock with perfect works, bearing a Swiss mark, by the way, as a guarantee of its quality while concealing its true nationality. It furthermore enjoyed an advantage unforeseen by the Swiss clockmaker. When the hands reached the exact hour for which the alarm was set, the bell was transformed into a detonator setting off any and all explosives which happened to be within reach.

All Marthe had to do was to secure a little cheddite, and the alarm clock could blow up an entire block of houses.

The other toy, a product of the charming industry practised in the Black Forest, was merely a hollow cane in which was secreted an incendiary product of incredible power. It was the same product as was put in the last bombs which the enemy fired into France, by way of adieu, just before the Armistice.

In the knob of the cane, a small mechanical lighter was deftly concealed. This being set off, and the cane being left casually in a hangar, a flame would spring up at the end of a few hours, developing an incredible degree of heat. Everything within a radius of sixty-five feet would be promptly consumed. If the engine was placed in a good position and favoured by a strong breeze, it was possible to start a conflagration destroying an entire aviation camp.

Baron von Kolberg himself, flanked by his satellite von Ronceval, drove Marthe with her deadly parcels in a motor as far as Figueras. This was the point at which she was to take the road by night.

Her chosen guide was a Spanish Catalan who looked

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like a professional highwayman, though he had a care to stick to the mountain by-ways. A mule had been brought to serve as the airwoman's mount, but the cold was so intense that she soon had to alight. For two hours thereafter she trod on the frozen snow in low-cut shoes with Louis XV heels.

An unexpected complication had arisen at the last moment, over the presence of her faithful little friend Flot.

Hitherto, she had left him in the apartment when she was absent. But her plan for kidnapping the Baron and bringing him to France, if possible, with Zozo's help, made her return to Madrid uncertain. She had no choice, therefore, but to take Flot with her to Barcelona, in readiness for all eventualities.

What she had not foreseen, however, was this expedition across the Pyrenees on mule-back and afoot. Unable to leave Flot among strangers, since it was possible she might never see Barcelona or Spain again, she could only take the frail little creature with her.

If she was half frozen on her mount, she had reason to fear that Flot would perish. When she alighted in self-defence, she at first carried him in her arms. But her own clothing was not warm enough to protect him, and his inertness deprived him of the warmth she developed by walking.

She therefore decided that he, too, must rough it, as the only chance of saving his life.

He was as game as possible. Having grown hardened to the first agony caused to his tender paws by the snow and ice and stones, he trotted bravely in the wake of his mistress, finishing afoot, with her, that extraordinary crossing of the Pyrenees.

They reached the frontier just before dawn, and had no great difficulty in passing into France. Two men hidden in a tiny cabin, close to the French line, skirmished ahead to reconnoitre, and came back to report

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that the road was clear. From there onward it was smooth sailing.

All but frozen and with badly bruised feet, Marthe at last reached her destination, with Flot shivering and cowering at her side. She asked to be taken at once to an inn, where she invented a fantastic yarn to reassure the managers. Her words were, however, far from bringing conviction to their minds. Fortunately, she relieved the situation by saying she must have a vehicle to take her immediately to Perpignan, where she had some important information to convey to the Special Commissioner.

The promptest possible satisfaction was given her in their desire to be rid of so strange a visitor.

At Perpignan the surprise and perplexity of the Special Commissioner himself were no less great, until he got me on the telephone wire and I assured him that all was well.

Two days later Marthe called on me in Paris, giving me a detailed report of her daring exploit and expressing regrets that she had not succeeded in accomplishing more.

But no intelligent effort is ever wasted, when one knows how to take advantage of it. We had in our hands two specimens of the Baron's new "toys" devised for our special benefit; besides which, our woman agent had detected the mule-path through the snows and over the sharp-pointed stones of the Pyrenees by which German agents smuggled their nefarious merchandise across the frontier into France.

We were thus enabled to lay snares exactly as trappers do in the openings of certain hedges where they are sure of their quarry. Some of the very best foxes of the Baron von Ronceval were eventually caught by us in this way.

Marthe's dramatic arrival at the little inn near the frontier, and her subsequent journey to Perpignan, were mentioned in the French Press a little later,*

* See Chapter XVI.

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accompanied by comments which might have proved highly embarrassing for her in Spain. But it may be recalled that she possessed a remarkable faculty for reversing to her own advantage situations of the most compromising nature. In her skilful hands, those Press extracts served as arguments to enhance Baron von Kolberg's confidence in her.

It was nevertheless essential to furnish proof that her journey to France had served some useful purpose in the interest of Germany. She had not forgotten that she had brought the Baron's " toys " officially for purposes of destruction, though she had unofficially made us a gift of them.

We therefore planned a spectacular performance for the benefit of the Baron, which cost us little more than a slight effort of the imagination.

The news was conveyed in the columns of a newspaper enjoying the friendliest terms with our special services. And although the information given was of an exceptionally sensational nature and was included conspicuously amid news from the front, the Press censors, watchful as they usually were, had somehow gone to sleep that night, or at all events closed their eyes very considerately, so that the article passed unmutilated. It read as follows :

" The aviation camp at X—— has narrowly escaped complete destruction by a conflagration whose exact origin it has been impossible to determine.

" It is believed that a careless smoker approached a reservoir of gasolene at night and accidentally set it afire.

" But it may also be apprehended that the deed was committed deliberately for an evil purpose. The very strong wind blowing that night in Lorraine drove towards the camp itself the formidable flames which leapt up from the sheds. The alarm having been sounded promptly, and the rescue work having been efficiently organized, there were no consequences

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beyond damage of a purely material nature. Five aeroplanes were destroyed by fire.

"The military authorities have ordered an investigation."

This newspaper article was hailed with joy in Madrid. Von Kolberg told Marthe later that, a few days after reading it, he had met his friend von Strasse. The latter inquired ironically whether his woman agent had gone for a term of duty at the French Fifth Bureau. Thereupon von Kolberg whipped out of his pocket the invaluable newspaper article and asked him to read it.

"What a strange creature!" Count von Strasse exclaimed in all seriousness. "When dealing with a woman like that, one may hope for anything, but there is also everything to be feared."

Yet what man could have bragged of seeing clearly, even with wide-open eyes and in broad daylight, when the treacherous lark-mirror was being madly flashed in his fascinated eyes by such a Skylark?

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CHAPTER XIV

SUBMARINE WARFARE

THERE was particularly one thing which struck me, in the course of my conversations with Marthe Richard during that visit of hers to France.

Our secret agent was far less enthusiastic than when I had last seen her, and she was also less completely mistress of herself.

The fact was that she had reached the point of abhorring the life she led in Spain. She told me so very plainly, clamouring for some mission in a new country where she would not be subjected to obligations as painful as those which she was accepting for our sake in Spain.

"You know how horses are," she said. "Worthy creatures though they are, neither whip nor spur will put life into them once they have grown tired of doing a thing. I am exactly the same way. Nothing out of all I am doing at present excites me any more. Find something else for me."

Fortunately, I had another and far bolder plan to submit to her.

She herself had suggested the idea during her previous visit to Paris, and she had reverted to it in almost all of her subsequent letters, with the tenacity which distinguished her.

Marthe had resolved that I must organize specially for her an expedition which, in her opinion, and it was probably a sound one, would bring her career to a triumphant conclusion.

The plan she had evolved was audacious, to say the

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least, but having once thought of it, nothing less would satisfy her.

She had absolutely set her heart on rifling Baron von Kolberg's safe.

She, who was the reverse of talkative as a rule, delivered to me an impassioned harangue on this subject, as she stressed the interest presented by the proposed operation.

What she had to tell me was in substance as follows :

" I was embarrassed for a reply when you asked me what purpose would be served by my Lark-Mirror. You remember ? Well, the only clear notion I had in my head at the time was that my beauty parlour would put me in a position to rifle the Baron's safe.

" But I knew you would immediately set the plan aside with any number of arguments. Why you want to tangle yourself up in so many arguments about what should or shouldn't be done is more than I can understand. Your adversaries don't stop to take such things into consideration.

" The very first time I mentioned my plan, you objected that it would be a serious violation of diplomatic conventions to force an entrance into the residence of the representative of an enemy nation in a neutral country. If the enterprise failed, and even if it succeeded but under conditions such that our Government could be incriminated, we should have to assume the gravest responsibilities. We should even risk provoking a rupture of diplomatic relations with that country, besides bringing on ourselves the terrible retaliation which might follow.

" It was for the purpose of freeing your service from any possible responsibility in the matter that I thought of inveigling to my own quarters as a Frenchwoman not only the Baron, but also the secret papers in his care. That way I should be the only guilty party—along with friend Pedroso, who would not have hesitated to lend me a hand.

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" The hostility of von Strasse compelled von Kolberg to leave his luggage behind when he came to settle in my quarters, however. So all that remained for me to do was to eke out my miserable existence as before, picking up crumbs of espionage information here and there as opportunity offered."

Marthe paused a moment to reflect, and resumed with enthusiasm :

" And yet, everything is in that safe of his !

" Von Kolberg is unquestionably the liaison agent of the German Naval G.H.Q. with Spain.

" It is he who gives orders for the movements and the supplying of the submarines in the Mediterranean and along the Atlantic coast. In his safe we should certainly find full details of all that organization, with particulars as to the bases used and the means available.

" I also know positively that we should find there the names of his agents in France and among our Allies, together with descriptions of them and their photographs. You have furthermore seen for yourself that he has just been instructed to destroy our war manufactories, probably in concert with von Strasse.

" Finally, numerous indications lead me to believe that he is also engaged in contraband as well as war propaganda. It's the whole game, in a word—and at a blow I can make all the cards fall on the table. You must admit that it's worth the candle ! "

I had no doubt whatever that Marthe was entirely right in what she said, only I could not tell her so. I had done my utmost to secure the authorization of my superiors for this operation. I had even gone so far as to propose that I might undertake it at my own peril if they would allow me a free hand. Nevertheless, I met with a categorical refusal.

I was therefore blocked in that direction. But at the same time, knowing Marthe as I had learned to know her, I was aware that I risked losing her services

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unless I at least allowed the hope to subsist that some day I might help her to carry out her plan.

Therefore I resolved to go as far as I dared in the matter. Her hesitation would thus be overcome, and later we should be guided by circumstances.

"I am more and more disposed to agree with your opinion, Marthe," I said. "It is necessary for us to put our hands on that whole nest of espionage. But doesn't it seem to you that the result may be effected without staking everything on one single gamble?

"When summer comes, you will return to San Sebastian, where you tell me that von Kolberg takes all his material with him. He will probably establish himself in a villa, as he did last year. You can easily manage so as to share it with him. Under such conditions, we can operate with far less risk, particularly as we shall be almost at the frontier. Within a few hours you can put not only your spoils in safety, but yourself also. For I absolutely refuse to see you sacrificed or even compromised."

"If I have to endure five additional months of such an existence, I shall no longer have the courage to finish the job," she said with a weary gesture.

"Yes, you will," I returned emphatically, "for the reason that I have a new programme to submit to you. It will be far more attractive, and particularly more useful, than the old one, which until now has consisted in waiting patiently for luck to put fresh secrets in your way.

"Especially since your courageous expedition across the Pyrenees and the destruction of the aviation camp which we staged as the sequel, you now enjoy enough influence over the Baron to induce him to take you with him on his various trips. These are becoming all the more frequent as the submarine campaign is intensified.

"Cling closely to him and don't relax your hold when he leaves Madrid.

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"I shall put you in touch with one of our agents, an army officer, Captain Z——. You may have complete confidence in him. He will have at his disposal facilities for communicating promptly with us, in case you have any urgent message to send me.

"Furthermore, I shall provide you personally with a special telegraphic address and a little code, enabling us to correspond when you are away from Madrid on one of your trips.

"There is no other way for ascertaining the movements of the submarines, or at all events their supply-bases, and informing us about these in good time.

"I shall advise my naval colleague, Lieutenant X——, who now has absolute confidence in you. Since I shall be working in concert with the Ministry of Marine, we shall be able to get prompt results.

"And so, you see, we have plenty of work cut out for us even before the coming of the summer months. I promise that I shall then give you the necessary assistance for carrying out your great enterprise in San Sebastian."

These arguments finally triumphed over the repugnance which Marthe felt at the thought of returning to Madrid. She gave me the formal assurance that she would once more devote to our service the resources of her exceptional imagination and self-possession, for a task which we might well hope to make successful, with the united help of the Intelligence Services of both the Army and the Navy.

Having recovered her spirits, Marthe accordingly went again into exile. This time she was armed with a special passport in the name of Baroness Davidoff, a Russian. The appearance on the scene of this new and fictitious character was prompted by my desire to obviate for Marthe the usual difficulties of crossing the frontier. It would not have been at all advisable for me to attract particular attention to her by issuing exclusive instructions in her favour. But a

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distinguished Russian noblewoman was entitled to all possible courtesies at the hands of the customs officials and everybody else.

In the sequel, this improvisation was to be turned to immense advantage by Marthe.

The mission upon which I had just concentrated her activities was no sinecure.

Official documents published since the war have made known the formidable destructive power which Germany had established on the high seas, in order to break the blockade whose redoubtable consequences were making themselves felt in her war manufactories and in the supplies needed for the population of the Central Empires.

The German Note in date of February 1, 1917, specifying the blockade of the French, Italian, and British coasts, while neglecting the blind alleys represented by the Baltic and the Black Sea, as well as the frozen shores of the Arctic Ocean, proclaimed the fierce intention of our adversaries to torpedo without warning all ships, regardless of nationality, encountered by German cruisers within twenty marine miles of the prohibited waters.

At the time when notice to this effect was issued, the German Naval Staff was to have at its disposal, towards the end of December, 1916, not one hundred and fifty submarines, as generally believed, but at least two hundred, as Marthe had informed us. These various units, and more especially the newest among them, had a radius of action of several thousand kilometres and could remain at sea for some fifty days at least, including the time needed for supplies and repairs.

It may therefore be reckoned, if the losses are taken into account, that from February, 1917, until the end of the war, there were always seventy or seventy-five German submarines in operation.

We had to take prompt action against this powerful

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destructive fleet which menaced our commercial as well as naval shipping, and neutrals as well as belligerents. To do this, we had at our disposal such improvised means of destruction and protection as destroyers, patrol-boats, submarine chasers, and merchant ships armed with guns.

But it was furthermore essential for us to create from the very bottom entirely new Intelligence services. For the enemy submarines necessarily had ports used as bases in neutral countries, with warehouses for supplies of all sorts, including food for the crews and oil and gasolene for the motors.

The German Naval G.H.Q. had regular connexions by wireless, and sometimes, when geographical conditions permitted, directly by wire, with these bases. In consequence, the submarines could go to sea while complying with the instructions issued by the German Admiralty for the damage they were to do. It is known that the losses which followed amounted to several million tons, and thousands of human lives.

Spain, with an irregular coast-line uninhabited at many points, and situated geographically between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, so as to present exceptional opportunities for a war having somewhat the nature of a hunting expedition, was the main sector of this organization. Since Baron von Kolberg was its chief, Marthe found herself posted at the very centre of the operations.

Nevertheless, the difficulties of her task had seemed to be almost insurmountable at the start, as indeed I had expected they would be. Not only was she totally ignorant of naval technique and tactics, but von Kolberg, an officer of career and a man of honour, did not forget the duties incumbent upon him, even when he was in Marthe's presence. It was not so much because he mistrusted his woman agent, as because he was conscious of his responsibilities, that he sought to hold the airwoman aloof from his projects and that he

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did not allow her to accompany him on his various journeys.

If one takes into account all these highly unfavourable circumstances, the results which Marthe was about to obtain were nothing less than remarkable. And yet she had before her only some two months in which to operate, for she was to be suddenly interrupted by an incident which none of us could possibly have foreseen.

She had no sooner returned to Madrid than she opened her campaign. The first act consisted in refusing to stay behind when the Baron left on his missions.

"The fact of my coming back to the beauty parlour will give away the entire game and end my relations with the French Intelligence Service as well as with the British," she declared to him. "You know perfectly well that the French have become so suspicious of my movements that they are no longer content with keeping a general watch over me, as they used to do. Instead, they find it necessary to keep one of their agents constantly on duty before my door, here, so as to know everything about whatever I may do and the people I may see."

The Baron nodded with a worried air. What Marthe had said was a grim fact which he could not deny. Indeed, it was far grimmer than he could suspect. For we had instituted this strict guard at the special request of Marthe herself.

She had told us that her vehement warnings and complaints to the effect that an occult watch was kept over her had been worn threadbare by constant repetition. It was time for us to make an open move against her, which she could exploit to good advantage against the Baron. When our agent was first posted at the entrance to the beauty parlour, she even refused to remain there, moving back for a while to the Palace Hotel, where she alleged that she could more readily

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escape attention, and even leaving Flot behind at the Institute, because he was too well known to everybody, she said. This comedy, played with Marthe's usual skill, had made a profound impression on the Baron.

"So I have done for myself with the French," Marthe continued. "And now I'm queered with the British too. I refused to accept an appointment proposed to me by Lieutenant Stinton, remember. If they had any doubts left, that was enough to let them know what I really am. What is the use in keeping up pretences any longer? By leaving me here you won't gain anything, and you will expose me to I don't know what sort of enterprises on their part. I'm afraid to remain while you are absent, and I simply won't do it."

Marthe had displayed all her danger signals. Probably convinced by her arguments, and certainly alarmed at the prospect of another violent scene in which he would come out the loser, as he invariably did with her, the Baron capitulated.

As for Marthe's words about the attitude of the British Intelligence Service towards her, it may be well for me to remark here that, as a matter of fact, we had never succeeded in effecting with our Allies really concerted bases for conducting the Secret War.

Tannery, who during the war was the chief animator of our operations to stop contraband of war, and who is now Director of the *Caisse des dépôts et consignations*, did everything in his power to bring about some measure of unity. The initial steps were successfully taken, and certain details were suitably settled in common, at the Inter-Allied Conferences held on September 10 and 11, 1916. But we never got far beyond that.

Each of the nations of the Entente was consequently in complete darkness as to the agents and the resources at the disposal of its Allies for the purpose of gathering

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information. It must be acknowledged that an Inter-Allied Bureau had been created in Paris at the close of these Conferences. But the only information centralized at the Bureau bore on those particulars, gathered by any one service, which had a really general character, or else which were of special interest to some individual belligerent.

The above explanation is necessary to make clear at the same time the efforts of our British friends to attach Marthe to their service, and their ignorance, which lasted to the end, concerning the importance and the accuracy of the information which we passed on to them but whose origin they could not ascertain.

"Ah!" they exclaimed later. "If we had only known that Marthe was in the service of the French General Staff, we should have given more credence to your information."

I should not be surprised if our Allies furthermore reflected:

"And what valuable services we ourselves could have secured from her, if only she had been working for us!"

Limited though it may have been in scope, because of the precarious means at her disposal, the information sent to us by Marthe concerning the submarine campaign was infinitely valuable for us.

During the fortnight which followed her departure from Paris, I received no real news from her. There came, however, a series of post cards from various towns she had visited. They allowed me to follow her in her migrations, whether by railway or in the high-powered car of the Baron, from Valencia to Cadiz, and from Bilbao to Barcelona, without forgetting dashes in the direction of Gibraltar and Corunna. They also showed me that Marthe was making much progress in her understanding of Spanish painting and sculpture, as Iberian art evolved from the Moorish and the Romano-Gothic style to the polychrome

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manner of the Eighteenth Century, and the cosmopolitan tastes of our own day.

A telegram came at last from Valencia :

"Am leaving by car for Bilbao where expect remain four days."

I forthwith sent a hurry call for the Navy to institute patrols all along the Cantabrian coast. But nothing resulted from this, because von Kolberg, passing through Madrid, had learned that his original orders were cancelled. A second telegram from Marthe informed me of this, by stating that her itinerary was altered and she was leaving in all haste for Huelva.

A week later, I was again put on the alert by the announcement that she was on her way to Barcelona.

But on reaching that city, the Baron had left her at the hotel in the evening, while he proceeded by night to southern Catalonia, probably to Tarragona. We could only conclude from this that a submarine had approached the shore there, either to get supplies or to receive orders.

Next there was a second trip to Cadiz. This directly concerned the English, who had to be warned of it, because they were responsible for the surveillance of that portion of the coast.

The tip we gave them reached them in good time. At the break of dawn, a detachment of their Mediterranean cruisers surprised a submarine navigating on the surface within sight of the town. A sharp bombardment of the submarine followed, the results remaining unknown to us until we received a letter from Marthe, written in sympathetic ink and posted at Cadiz.

We learned from this that the submarine had a mission to bombard one of our munition factories near Biarritz. As ill luck would have it, the operation was executed, at daybreak, in spite of the efforts made by our submarine chasers to prevent it. Which goes to

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show once more how very difficult it is to watch and to destroy those evasive corsairs.

But presently luck was to be on our side.

Von Kolberg's prerogatives included sending supplies of arms and munitions to the Moroccan tribes in rebellion against us.

Germany, it will be recalled, was seeking to conduct a campaign on all fronts simultaneously. At the very outset she had made, however, a mistake which contributed to our victory at the Battle of the Marne, when she refused to believe that we would take away men from our North African front.

She was convinced that we would resort to all possible means for assuring the security of our great African colony. What she had failed to take into account was at the same time the character and the ability of General Lyautey. With his usual prompt spirit of decision, he gauged at a glance the exact effective forces which he would need to maintain our ascendancy over the dissident Moroccans, and he was accordingly able to place all the remainder of our North African troops at the disposal of General Joffre.

Having discovered their initial mistake, the Germans next sought to organize and to support the rebellion. The Balearic Islands and southern Spain became the centres for a series of operations whose aim was to provide the Moroccans with arms.

These were to be received on the spot and distributed by agents posted there in readiness. Notably the Mannesmann brothers had left useful traces of their long sojourn, by which they intended their compatriots to profit.

Marthe, in the course of one of her trips with von Kolberg, sent us word that an expedition was being prepared in utmost secrecy " somewhere near Gibraltar," for the purpose of conveying a big shipment of arms and munitions to the Riffans. She had not been

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able to ascertain the exact spot where these preparations were being made.

The French Resident General was immediately warned by us, and the coast of Spanish Morocco was put under close watch.

The barques, fitted out near Cadiz, had managed to slip through the guard of British cruisers by mixing in very cleverly with the fishing fleet. Reaching the Moroccan coast at dawn, they began to unload.

In the very middle of the operation, a torpedo-boat appeared on the scene and fired some warning shots. Several tons of Mausers and cases full of cartridges were seized.

By this time, Marthe was in Malaga, where another form of Secret War operations had been started.

The month of May, 1917, had now been reached, and our various services had begun to transmit their information in ways which synchronized remarkably. It might have been said that our chronometers had been put in perfect working order, so that it had become relatively easy for us to take our bearings.

So it came about that Marthe sent us detailed information about a certain operation soon to be executed in Spain, just a few days after our agent in Switzerland had given us advance warning that something of the kind was in preparation.

This time, it was a scheme to land on the Spanish coast a cargo of the little Nuremberg "toys," two specimens of which had previously been brought to us by Marthe. The manufactories in the Black Forest were now turning out large quantities of these.

They were to be put at the disposal of von Strasse and von Kolberg, to be conveyed to France and distributed so as to blow up our various war manufactories.

We are indebted to the vigilance of Marthe Richard for the fact that to-day the submarine rests with its deadly load at the bottom of the sea, just off Malaga, in fifty-four fathoms of water.

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CHAPTER XV

THE BAPTISM OF THE TROPICS

A LACONIC telegram sent from Madrid by Captain Z—— conveyed to us, when deciphered, some news which filled us with equal concern and astonishment.

It read:

"Marthe leaving for Buenos Ayres. Letter following."

Our suspense lasted forty-eight hours.

When at last we heard from Marthe herself, it was to receive the announcement that she was about to embark in the *Reina Christina* for the Argentine Republic, Baron von Kolberg having entrusted to her a new and mysterious mission.

Its nature? Why, it was one which could not but appeal to the Skylark. Because the generic duty of this bird, as everybody should know, consists in protecting the produce of the earth against the ravages of destructive insects.

On such an errand of charity was Marthe now bound. Her period of duty with the German Navy had, indeed, come to an end with a magnificent climax, since her exploit in denouncing the activities of the submarine had been instrumental in saving our war manufactories from the deadly effects of the Baron's Nuremberg "toys," any one of which would have sufficed to destroy an entire plant.

Having experienced the naval war which admitted of no mercy, she was now transferred to the economic war which excluded all thought of pity.

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For the Germans had conceived the ambitious design of annihilating the stores of Argentinian wheat on which we depended to a great extent for our supplies. By volunteering for this perilous mission, Marthe hoped to be able once again to avert a catastrophe.

One of my most delightful comrades at the Counter-Espionage Service, Lafenestre, at present one of the Directors of the Prefecture of Police, remarked to me at about that time:

"If Marthe did not already exist, we should have to invent one like her. She has passed through all the services of the Fifth Bureau, leaving behind her a fine record of heroic or highly amusing adventures. The unexpected is her natural element, it is for her mind what the air itself is for her lungs as a flyer."

"The chief reason for it all," I answered, "is manifestly that, being attached to the person of von Kolberg, she is, so to speak, seated in one of the very first boxes, on the stage itself.* Her extraordinary aptness for making the best of draughts, behind the scenes where they reign supreme, is what has allowed her to hold out where others would have contracted bronchitis twenty times over. Let a strong breeze spring up, and her imagination swiftly carries her off towards unsuspected horizons."

"She is, in a word, the type of the complete spy," Lafenestre concluded, filling his pipe.

Our conversation stopped there, for another of our colleagues, Hallaure, started his usual game of betting on the exact portion of my clothes which would catch fire next, from the flaming tobacco dropped by one of the fifty-odd cigarettes I was sure to smoke in the course of the day. It was easy betting, and he won much money at it.

On this occasion, Marthe felt that the task she had

* In old-fashioned French theatres, boxes are still seen on each side of the stage; they are cut off from the house when the curtain falls.

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undertaken might possibly be beyond her, unless she had help ready at hand. She had picked up a fairly fluent knowledge of Spanish, so she was confident about finding her way; but working out a plan and applying it in a distant country under unfamiliar conditions was another matter.

Fearless as she was, she may furthermore have reflected that a trap might have been spread for her, either by von Strasse or even by von Kolberg himself, if the latter's suspicions had at last been turned against her.

The Baron had, at intervals, reminded her that he kept every secret letter written in sympathetic ink which she sent him, containing the information which I transmitted through Zozo.

"If you ever betray me to the French," the Baron would say warningly, "I shall take your letters to the Spanish police. They suffice to prove you are a spy, and that will mean for you five years in a Spanish prison."

It must be said that these letters were addressed not to the Baron but to some fictitious woman, as "Dear Marie" or "Dear Anna"; he had given categorical instructions to this effect, so as not to identify himself directly with them. But they were written in Marthe's hand, and their contents were plain enough; and, most compromising fact of all, secret ink was used.

So that Marthe well knew she was at the Baron's mercy, if ever he held against her proofs of treachery which even his enamoured eyes could not deny. Her security lay in the wilful blindness which resulted from his steadily growing infatuation, but her chief danger lay there also.

The Baroness had begun to suspect that von Kolberg might admire Marthe otherwise than just as an agent —who incidentally was forbidden to engage in any active espionage work, so that her functions were difficult to define.

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Marthe well knew how unfortunate it would be for her to lose this valuable and hitherto willing ally. The blandishments of Paris fashions helped to prolong the situation. Frequently coming to France on one pretext or another, Marthe never returned to Madrid without hats or dresses for the Baroness. But as has been seen, Marthe had to be more cautious, now, and could not continue to visit us every two months or so, as she would have wished.

This powerful hold on the Baroness accordingly began to weaken at the very moment when the good lady first observed the extent of Marthe's influence over von Kolberg. There had even been scenes between husband and wife, Marthe had occasion to suspect, on more than one occasion when the Baron came back to the beauty parlour from his home, looking—well! as he had looked after certain scenes with Count von Strasse. Only, his state of commotion was much greater now.

So, it occurred to her that von Kolberg's almost too prompt acceptance of her offer to go to South America might have had an ulterior motive. He might, in fact, intend to get rid of her for good and all. And there would be no Pedroso to advise and protect her, too, if necessary.

She therefore appealed to us, urging the absolute necessity for us to send one of our agents with her to South America.

After some hesitation, I decided to act on her request. A sergeant named Marie, who had been badly gassed and had been recalled from the front in consequence, was designated. I informed Marthe that he would be at a certain hotel in Cadiz, and if she put up there before sailing, on May 11, he would make himself known to her.

Von Kolberg, who had made different plans for her stay in the port, did not prove amenable to her suggestion.

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"Why that hotel?" he demanded. "I don't like it. You must go to the——"

Marthe met this unforeseen objection with a true woman's argument.

"I looked in the book, and it says this is the best hotel," she argued.

"But I tell you it isn't!" snapped the Baron.

"The book says——"

"Well, the book's wrong. Haven't I told you——"

"Yes, but the book——"

At the end of ten minutes, the Baron surrendered. Marthe went to the hotel recommended by the book—and by me.

The agent whom I sent had no difficulty in connecting with her, even though they had little opportunity to exchange more than an understanding look or two. But at least she went aboard the *Reina Christina* with a feeling of security because Sergeant Marie was not far away.

That was as much as he could do for her, though, because of the Spanish custom of separating men's cabins from women's. This made it so difficult for her to communicate with him, that she did not see just how they could work together if necessity arose, and her quick mind worked vainly in efforts to find a solution.

Marthe nevertheless enjoyed to the full the *de luxe* cabin which von Kolberg had taken for her. He had, in fact, done handsomely by her. When not there, she was stretched out in her chair on deck, marvelling at the brightness of the day or at the brilliancy of the southern constellations which spangled the heavens.

The steamer, even after leaving European waters and the zone prohibited by Germany in the Declaration of Integral Submarine Warfare, proceeded at slow speed, as a measure of prudence. The passengers and the watch kept their eyes anxiously fixed on the surface of the sea, expecting to be greeted at any

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moment by a periscope emerging under their very nose.

It sufficed for a cachalot, in sportive mood, to display its back glistening with foam between two playful leaps, and the man on watch, taken by surprise, would immediately call out; "Submarine to port!" just to be on the safe side. The measures of security provided for in such emergencies would then be applied automatically.

Alone of all on board, Marthe did not take part in this drill. With a discreet irony which was mistaken for rashness, she would merely smile. For she knew that the *Reina Christina* was held sacred. Before she had left Cadiz, von Kolberg had sent out a circular message to all German submarines operating in the Atlantic, enjoining them to respect the ship in which Marthe had embarked with her cargo.

It was indeed a highly precious cargo which the chief of the Naval Sectors of the Iberic Peninsula had entrusted to Germany's confidential agent, in conformity with the instructions received from his Government.

Not that this special cargo occupied much space, considering the fifteen thousand tons' displacement of the *Reina Christina*. It consisted, in fact, of only two cabin trunks and a box of letter-paper.

And yet, when delivering it over to Marthe von Kolberg had taken precautions as great, and had given to her instructions as minute, as if it had had the fantastic value of an entire pound of radium.

Perhaps it may be well, for the ready comprehension of what follows, to cast a backward glance on the course of events which had led up to this decision on the Baron's part. Another mystery of the Secret War was involved, and its origin lay in the situation created just as soon as the smoke subsided after the great and protracted frontier battle, which had set the world ablaze from the fogs of the North Sea to the sunny

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Mediterranean. There remained then for the world the mud and the depression of the trenches.

A new problem confronted the belligerents at this juncture. They realized that before fighting and dying they must manage to live. Their rulers accordingly engaged in a mad race to secure provisions of all sorts.

Here again the Germans had a great advantage over us. Long before the outbreak of the war, they had created an intricate system of commercial representatives and warehouses all over the globe. This organization, which in time of peace had served for their export business, stretched out tentacles like an octopus. Its activity took on a different form, however, as soon as the Battle of the Marne had been fought.

The Economic Section of our General Staff, having Tannery as its chief, deserves great credit for the success with which it discovered the efforts of Germany's commercial agents to corner as swiftly as possible all available foodstuffs and raw materials. The very first letters intercepted and code telegrams deciphered by our postal and telegraphic surveillance system brought proof of a concerted scheme, with ample details.

This was a particularly formidable phase of the underhanded and wellnigh invisible Secret War which took such varied shapes, attacking all classes and all things, non-combatants as well as soldiers, and the nerves of exasperated populations. Death from starvation was to be apprehended no less than death on the battle-field. And the indomitable arrogance of Germany may after all have been brought to its knees by the violent though noiseless blows of the Secret War, repeated without respite, rather than by the might of our arms.

With pounds sterling or with marks, with francs or with lire, with generous handfuls of gold, the belli-

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gerents had rushed towards the mines and the garners of the world, seeking at any price to secure the output for their exclusive use.

Neutrality of mere form had been worn down by these reiterated assaults. On every side the profiteer was king. Wheat-producing countries found that this commodity provided for one of their most lucrative operations. The demand for cereals indeed grew greater day by day, as the number of men under arms increased, to the detriment of agricultural regions where labour soon ran short.

Germany, as I have explained, had been the first country to grasp this situation.

In 1916 she had secured, from little but courageous Rumania, the pledge that all excess crops would be sold to her. She had used as arguments to this end the threat of mighty armies but also the temptations of avarice.

France had then been compelled to fall back on South America, which could no longer connect with the German seaports. Large stocks of wheat had thus been accumulated by us in the elevators and in the store-houses of Buenos Ayres.

The Germans looked upon these as veritable munition dumps, to which the orders issued by Ludendorff to all German agents abroad must be applied. The only protection of our wheat reserves lay in their geographical remoteness, and in the difficulties encountered by our enemies when they undertook to operate in neutral countries.

Such methods as fire and explosives being out of the question, the wise men of Germany resolved to set insects to work. The two trunks entrusted to Marthe contained weevils.

These specimens, of a very rare kind, had been carefully selected by the Berlin Institute of Agriculture, and were in prime condition. Placed comfortably in bottles rather similar to thermos flasks, they were

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to be preserved at an even temperature, gauged by medical thermometers.

Immediately upon arriving in Buenos Ayres, Marthe was to see that they fulfilled their mission of attacking our wheat reserves.

When the ship steamed from Cadiz, there were barely ten weevils in each bottle. By the time the Canaries had been reached, they had multipled more swiftly than rats, plentifully fed as they were with fat ears of wheat, which the Baron had thoughtfully given to their guardian for the purpose.

He had, indeed, carefully considered all possible details so that these formidable pests should survive the fatigues of the journey.

Yet there was one geographical consideration upon which he had not stopped to reflect. It was that in order to go from Spain to the Argentine, the Equator must be crossed, and the event is invariably celebrated by the traditional Baptism of the Tropics.

Marthe, however, had borne this in mind. And so it came about that for the weevils there was on this occasion a Baptism of Fire.

During the very first days at sea, she had taken pains to be exceedingly nice to the stokers, for there is never any telling whose help one may need. She never passed one but she had a friendly smile for him; several times she yielded to the caprice of visiting the stokehold, tipping her guides magnificently; and somehow they had learned that she enjoyed all but Royal powers.

One of these men, in particular, had a comical face under his grime, and Marthe could not refrain from smiling when she looked at him. He was flattered at the attention from one so exalted as she, and at the earliest opportunity which offered, he told her all about his wife and children. Several others were immediately on the alert to discuss their family affairs with her, not knowing what unexpected good fortune might follow.

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So that when she came to them, asking a favour, on the day when the Line was to be crossed, they felt only too happy at being able to gratify her in any way.

What she wanted was simple enough, she explained. She was getting up a little party as a surprise for a group of friends she had made on board. That would be her way of celebrating the crossing of the Line, but she was playing a practical joke on them before the party. She had read about such things in books, and she had brought some excellent rum and other ingredients on purpose from Spain. Only, punch had to be served hot, and that was where the trouble began. She had staged her surprise so that nobody should suspect anything about its real nature until the very last moment. If she enlisted the help of the stewards, they were sure to betray her, because much curiosity had already been roused about her little plan.

The only hope was therefore for her friends in the stokehold to help her out.

All she needed was to go down, with their permission, and heat the punch against the boilers——

The blackened faces, which had been earnestly fixed on her while she spoke, beamed with fun. Certainly, she could do as she wished! So they escorted her below, and selected the very best place for warming the punch without doing injury to the flasks; and they gravely advised her as to the proper time which should be allowed to heat the liquor nicely without overboiling it.

Needless to say, the flasks were the ones filled with weevils.

The insects from Berlin did not outlive their surprise party, of course. Yet it had been so cleverly planned by Marthe, and so ably executed with the help of her improvised allies, that they bore no outer evidence of the fate they had endured. They seemed to have died naturally as a consequence of the equatorial heat.

Having assured herself that the weevils were dead

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beyond possibilities of resurrection, Marthe next turned her attention to the second part of her confidential mission to the Argentine.

The box of letter-paper which Baron von Kolberg had given to her contained the customary fifty envelopes and an equal number of sheets. But forty-eight of the latter served only as flags of truce treacherously concealing the true nature of this merchandise. The last two sheets were covered with secret instructions, written with "Unguleum," for applying the weevils to the wheat so as to attain maximum results.

Marthe devoted some time to studying out the problem of what she should do with those two sheets.

It was superfluous to deliver them, the material to which they referred having lost its capacity for doing harm. Yet it would be dangerous to destroy them, since suspicions would then almost inevitably have been aroused.

A thought which kept recurring worried her considerably. What if those instructions furthermore contained some details of an unpleasant nature affecting herself? For she had not yet shaken off the idea that this singular pleasure-trip might conceal a trap for her.

In her cabin she could not, unaided, operate on the sheets so as to read the secret writing. She felt sure that she and Sergeant Marie between them could do it, however, in the ship's dark-room where photographic negatives were developed. But she had not been able to do more than just exchange a casual word with Marie in passing, and even that only on rare occasions.

Rather providentially, it would have seemed, he contracted a severe cold—was threatened with possible bronchitis, considering the state in which the gas had left his lungs——

He sent her a note by a safe messenger, explaining his temporary disappearance, which he knew might otherwise have alarmed her.

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She rushed to his cabin with a bottle of liniment. Here at last was her chance.

But a scandalized ship's officer thundered rude raps on the door, following them up promptly with vociferous and imperative orders for her to leave the men's section of the ship: there was a doctor aboard, he said, whose duty it was to apply liniment or anything else which might be necessary.

Cast definitely on her own resources, Marthe did not hesitate long over the course to follow.

Before leaving the steamer, she had occasion to write to the Baron. By the most natural of errors, she chanced to use the last two sheets, instead of any others among the fifty at her disposal. And she naïvely wrote thereon a lively account of the voyage, assuring him of her deep gratitude for this delightful experience which she owed entirely to his great kindness.

After taking scrupulously all needful precautions in the fulfilment of her mission, as the Baron had so strongly and minutely recommended her to do, Marthe turned over to the Baron's representative at Buenos Ayres the little army which he was to have put in operation, if it had not been annihilated before the first battle.

Her hands trembled and her eyes filled with genuine tears, when she discussed with the secret agent the situation which now seemed only too clear. And indeed, she had become deeply interested in her charges, after all the care she had taken of them.

"I did everything imaginable to save them!" she assured the Baron's official representative. "I could see them perishing away day by day, as we came farther south across these hot seas. I even tried putting them on ice——"

"Didn't you know better than to do that? Then that is what killed them!" exclaimed the agent, in dismay.

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Was it, indeed? Marthe could only be very sorry, deeply sorry. She had meant so exceedingly well!

Luckily, the Germans had not thought of establishing a veterinary legist in the Argentine. Nobody on the spot could tell, on the strength of a summary examination, just how the weevils had happened to die. As for von Kolberg, the report sent to him by his colleague in the Argentine convinced him that the catastrophe which had overtaken his miniature menagerie could be accounted for only by Marthe's excess of zeal.

He similarly attributed to her thoughtlessness the second disaster which marked her sensational mission to the tropics.

For she had delivered to von Kolberg's friend, at Buenos Ayres, in conformity with her instructions, the box of precious letter-paper, containing however only forty-eight sheets; and at the same time she had handed him a sealed letter, begging him to be so good as to see that it got off safely by the very first steamer leaving for Spain. This the officer gallantly declared that he would be charmed to do, since the letter was for von Kolberg.

He cabled to his chief that the weevils were all dead, and that the forty-eight sheets of letter-paper had resisted his very best efforts to make them reveal anything.

The Baron, greatly puzzled, tried in his turn, and failed. Then he had the brilliant idea of ascertaining whether Marthe might not have blundered by using the very sheets which should have been preserved intact.

"Of course!" he exclaimed in disgust, when his own instructions were revealed under his eyes, mixed in with her writing. "Marthe couldn't have done better."

But he was mistaken in that. Both matured and invigorated by her trip, Marthe was to do better not once, but twice, at his expense.

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She returned to him very contrite over her failure, but immensely enthusiastic about the magnificent trip on which he had sent her. She furthermore introduced Sergeant Marie to him—knowing that the presence of the latter with her in the Argentine and on the journey home would have been duly reported, even if her companion had escaped notice when outward bound.

"Here's a Frenchman who's disgusted with France!" she informed the Baron. "Just think, he was wounded and they won't do a thing for him! He had to go out to the Argentine looking for work, but he found nothing, and now he's compelled to go back to France, though he very naturally hates the country!"

The Baron was greatly edified.

Sergeant Marie indeed came back to us, though not with the sentiments Marthe attributed to him. Poor fellow, he served us faithfully until he died three months later, from the effect of the gas on his lungs.

Marthe, too, ran in to see us immediately after her return from the Argentine. She told von Kolberg that she must come and get Flot, having sent him to France in the care of a friend when she sailed on her mission. She also had some more Paris hats and dresses to buy for the Baroness, because fashions kept changing in the most disconcerting way.

Incidentally, she profited by her visit to bring us, as exhibit, a few specimens of very rare weevils, soundly boiled and safely dead, for purposes of scientific laboratory study.

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CHAPTER XVI

ZOZO

THE nickname of "Zozo" which Marthe had given to her friend the aviator has been retained by me here, although it may bring a smile to the lips of those who know this dark-haired Slav with thick eyebrows beneath which his eyes glow like coals of fire.

It seems that Zozo is the diminutive of "z'oiseau." He was certainly the airiest of winged creatures as he circled round Marthe's Caudron plane, tracing marvellous curves, when the Skylark herself took flight.

To-day Zozo, his legs broken twice over, goes limping and hopping cheerily through life. He indeed suggests the captive birds which fortune-tellers at country fairs used to exhibit when I was a child, a match replacing a leg that was lost.

No stranger partnership could have been imagined than that of Marthe with Zozo. There was nothing but contrast and opposition in common between these two flight comrades. They were like the frozen snow and the blinding sun seen alternately across the steppes of Southern Russia.

Indeed, that was the region from which Zozo had come straight to us, escaping from the death sentence passed against him by the Tiflis courts. In the summer of 1905, he had been the chief instigator of the revolt in Georgia. Zozo was, in fact, one of our very first Bolsheviks.

When he applied to us for admission to the Counter-Espionage Service, about the middle of 1916, he already wore both the *Croix de Guerre* and the *Médaille*

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militaire, awarded to him after an engagement in which he had two enemy aeroplanes against him, and he crashed.

I asked him to give me in writing his *curriculum vitæ*, and I have kept the memorandum he handed me. Those fifty pages are before me to-day. Written at one sitting and, as it were, without drawing breath, in a swift and quivering hand, they form the strangest revolutionary treatise which I have ever seen.

Here are the opening paragraphs:

"My life so far has been as sterile for humanity as for myself. Probably the only action of mine which will remain of practical value will be the one eventually reducing my carcass to the earth, which may thus be made more fertile for coming generations.

"Like so many others, and surely more than others, being still too young to resist, I felt rising in me the molten lava which at intervals breaks through the rough crust of the earth, or else bursts the fragile envelope of a twenty-year-old heart.

"Unconsciously, I then became the centre of one of those sudden earthquakes which, like the shocks of war, so frequently remind men of their powerlessness to subject nature and reason to their laws.

"Where is Good to be found, or Evil? Or Happiness, or Misfortune? Where is Truth, where Falsehood?

"Vainly have I tried, in my search for them, to scale the heights of the Ideal, towards which the great leaders of peoples seemed to point with a prophetic finger from the summit of their scientific attainment or else astride the very clouds. Vainly did I seek, in my dashing aeroplane, to mount into the skies, the last feudal refuge of the gods. But ever I fell down out of my dream, each time more badly bruised in spirit, like my proud brothers, the eagles of the Caucasus stricken in full flight by the thunderbolts of the Elburz Mountains.

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"Having tumbled from Revolution and from aviation, nothing remains for me except to burrow in the earth. Will you take me as a spy?"

I hesitated for a long while, before employing him. Not that I was prompted to distrust him. A true revolutionary is rarely a traitor. But I did not see just how I could make use of this fierce breaker of bonds. The counter-espionage business needs, above all, active agents capable of putting a constant check upon their imagination, even where passive resistance is lacking.

"You already have Marthe to hold with a tight rein," my prudent assistant said to me, when I broached the subject to him in my office. "What will become of us, if we also have to keep her Zozo between the shafts?"

So I had long been at a loss to know how to put Marthe and Zozo in harness together. But, as has been seen, my decision was finally that I had no choice but to risk the experiment.

From that moment a species of harmony was established, causing things to run with remarkable smoothness. Particularly one sudden emergency which arose proved that no better team could possibly have been found.

The German General Staff, which never feared to take initiatives and which was never discouraged by reverses, had removed the management of the propaganda service in neutral countries from the hands of poor Erzberger, who laments so loudly over the fact in his Memoirs. The execution of this work had then been divided up among the various agents stationed abroad. So it came about that von Kolberg unexpectedly saw a fortune of five hundred thousand pesetas placed at his disposal for this purpose. But he had not the remotest idea as to how he could spend it while remaining strictly within the instructions which accompanied the package of bank-notes. He

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was told explicitly and peremptorily that the money was to be used for the purpose of " beating down the morale of the Frenchman." And thereby his task was rendered very complicated indeed.

The five million francs or so which, in two instalments, had been put by the Germans into the supple fingers of the former barber, Bolo Pasha, and the ten millions which they had just imprudently entrusted to the sieve-like hands of the youthful and prodigal Pierre Lenoir,* had not sufficed to teach prudence to our adversaries. Their policy now consisted in obtaining from professional peace agitators what the military operations had been unable to do for them.

When Marthe returned from her surprising expedition to the Argentine, the pesetas and the instructions had already been brought to von Kolberg by the submarine U-202, subsequently interned at Cadiz.

The Baron, very proud of the adventure of his woman agent in spite of the detail that her mission was a failure, wished to present her to the commander of the submarine. It had immediately occurred to him that she was just the right person to give prompt satisfaction to the demands of the General Staff.

What may have helped him to reach this conclusion was the fact that Marthe herself, upon hearing of his windfall and the string tied to it, had promptly said to herself :

" Oh ! All that money must not benefit aliens. We must have just as big a share of it as I can get."

Von Kolberg, unconscious of her little plot against his secret pocket-book, was happily inspired to take her to dine aboard the submarine. After leaving table, Marthe leaned idly against the rail, throwing crumbs to the fish and listening to the conversation between the two naval officers. Her proximity

* Both condemned and executed, in 1918 and 1919 respectively, for intelligence with the enemy in Press matters.

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aroused no suspicions, because she had faithfully lived up to my recommendation about pretending to know no German at all.

From just a word caught here and there, she gathered that the two officers were arranging details for the escape of the corsair, the Baron having, in fact, come down for this express purpose.

She informed us of this as soon as she had returned to Madrid, and we considered that she had made excellent use of her time, even before we learned of her additional activities.

Presently von Kolberg changed from German to French, as he turned to Marthe and asked:

"Don't you happen to know, among your friends, an anarchist? A real one, the genuine article, who could preach revolutionary ideas in France?"

"Why, Zozo, my fiancé, of course!" she exclaimed with her usual swiftness of decision. "You seem to have forgotten that our own 'indicator' was formerly the leader of the Georgian revolution. He has been wounded, he is covered with medals and palms,* he's adored by all the 'marraines' of France, and he has now been honourably discharged from the army. If I write to him, he can be in Madrid within a week."

"Write, then," von Kolberg said, overjoyed at the opportunity to show his comrade, the submarine commander, how readily a naval officer of his calibre could solve difficult problems.

He continued:

"Don't tell him what I expect him to do, and don't make any promises whatsoever. Just see that he gets here as soon as possible. You understand? I want to beat von Strasse in the race."

Von Kolberg and poor Marthe as well as the unfortunate Zozo himself were, however, soon to learn the wisdom of the proverb about making haste slowly.

* Affixed to the *Croix de Guerre* ribbon in recognition of additional meritorious acts.

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Zozo arrived in Spain at the end of June, responding to the mysteriously worded appeal authorized by the Baron. He put up at the Palace Hotel so as to be within ready call of Marthe, but he was prudent though prompt in establishing connexions with her. The Baron did not wish them to be seen together; and perhaps he was somewhat jealous of this "fiancé," while being perfectly aware of all the advantages presented by the alleged sentimental link.

They met usually in Marthe's room, where several long conferences were held with the Baron himself. Marthe had prompted Zozo for the part he must play by saying to him simply:

"You are the most dangerous of anarchists."

The instruction sufficed for business purposes; and in the intervals Zozo kept out of trouble by assuming the character of a lover so entranced at being near his "fiancée" that he was little less than idiotic.

The first interview between von Kolberg and Zozo very naturally took the form of a relentless *questionnaire*. What the Baron did not suspect, throughout, was that this former revolutionary was, as he has himself admitted on various occasions, an expert at leg-pulling. It must be remarked, too, that Marthe did her utmost to help mystify the Baron, not only before the quizzing but after; and we have seen how great an adept she was at such things.

I assume that the statement relative to the facts of his life, as made by Zozo to the Baron, was in keeping with the memorandum he had handed to me. So I need not repeat the details here.

When the quizzing had come to an end, von Kolberg attempted to draw deductions:

"I now know what you have done in the past. What I fail to see is, how you can help me in the future. France is not a country open to revolutionary ideas, like Georgia. We learned that, at the declaration of war. We had counted on political dissensions

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there and the active support which the Socialists had promised us, but we were mistaken. Since then we have spent much money in sheer loss, endeavouring to put the French people on their guard against the poverty and privations which will overwhelm the land immediately after our victory, which is certain. Our ' Political Section ' must have adopted wrong methods, and the huge sums put at its disposal have been inadequately applied, for we have hitherto failed completely in all our efforts.

" That is why the Director of the War Operations has just taken our propaganda into his own hands. I am therefore responsible for large sums already sent to me for this purpose, and more is to follow. What can it matter to us——"

The Baron changed his tone, speaking with pride as he continued :

" What can it matter to us, if we spend for our secret services the cost of one day of warfare, that is to say, nearly two hundred and fifty million francs, provided we thereby economize the cost of several months of hostilities for Germany, and for all the world too ! What we seek is not so much to achieve the glory of victory, as to introduce at last into the world German method and German order."

Theoretically true, the words spoken by the Baron were logical in appearance and superficially irrefutable. But Zozo, the intellectual grandson of the venerable grandmother of the Russian Revolution, Brechko-Brechkovsky, was the fellow-disciple of Jean Grave and Sebastien Faure, of Roubanovitch and Rojanoff, in the early school of anarchy ; he had furthermore been a co-signer with Lenin of the Socialist Revolutionary Pact, and he was personally a pure anarchist.

Accordingly, Zozo's response took the form of a violent outburst :

" You talk to me about German order. I was

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formerly familiar with Russian order. Do you believe, my dear Baron, that they are so very different? Or that they are not the brothers of French order, which is drowning out strikes in streams of blood; or of British order, which holds two hundred and fifty million Hindus crushed down in order to avert possibilities of rebellion?

"No! Bourgeois order is everywhere the same, you see. It is like a grave, or a galley in which the slaves, chained to their oars, have been rowing without respite for centuries, under the menace of the lash or the knout, and all for the profit of a few slave-traders.

"The people are starving—that's order.

"There is neither justice nor even pity for the workman or the native—that's order.

"There is neither education nor rest—that is also order.

"Prison and the penitentiary—that's your order, eternally.

"That is the order we won't have anything further to do with. After this war, in which millions of our own will have fallen—by order—other millions will come home, in waves followed by other waves, breaking in blood-stained foam, to annihilate your famous Social order and replace it at last by plain Human order."

The Baron von Kolberg, utterly amazed, tried to stop this flow of words.

"And yet," he interrupted, "you have fought side by side with the French bourgeois against the German bourgeois——"

"You have failed to understand me," Zozo returned, "just as the French officers failed to understand me. Seeing me rashly fly to fight single-handed against five—five of your aeroplanes, sir—they believed I was serving France against Germany. They covered me with money and with decorations which I accepted

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like the blows in the face given to me formerly by the Cossacks, guardians of the Throne and of God.

"Each decoration splashed across my chest, like each wound from the knout seaming my face, was to me like another stroke from the avenging ploughshare tracing the furrows in which the seed is slowly germinating for the harvest of the Revolution to come."

Vol Kolberg, bewildered by this avalanche of flaming words, which may indeed have been sincere at the moment they were uttered by this experienced leg-puller, still endeavoured to hold his own. Thinking of the use he must make of his budget for the exclusive benefit of revolutionary propaganda in France, he asked almost timidly:

"You might tell me, at all events, what you plan to do with the money I shall entrust to you."

"If I knew you believed that a single penny out of all your millions, Baron, was to be devoted to propaganda in favour of Germany," Zozo replied, "I should wish you a very good day, and I should curse Marthe for bringing me here. I came to you for the same reason which made me serve the French yesterday. I have no desire to serve either of you, but only my brothers without a country."

The Baron was now absolutely delighted. He said to himself:

"Neither Erzberger nor von Strasse will ever be able to find such a champion."

Aloud, he said:

"I shall put in your hands one hundred thousand pesetas. But since you cannot cross the frontier with Spanish bank-notes to such an amount on your person, you will leave Madrid in a car with us to-morrow. We shall arrange to change the money at a place I know. Men in my service will then take you across."

Zozo nodded his assent. He was being left practically a free hand, and he was well satisfied.

"But," the Baron added solemnly, "I warn you

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that I hold Marthe as hostage. If you betray us, she must atone for you."

"The Russian General Martinoff told me exactly the same thing at Tiflis, long ago," Zozo replied with a broad grin. "I had to get out of the place, leaving my fiancée behind as hostage. I pledged my word to the general that if he let me go I would stop the peasants at the very doors of the city, after I myself had incited them to rise up."

"What happened?" von Kolberg inquired, as he poured out a glass of excellent port for his new agent.

"Oh! Everything happened perfectly naturally as a matter of course," Zozo resumed his narrative. "As soon as I was free, I put myself once more at the head of the movement. For four entire days we held a division of the Russian army at bay in a suburb of Tiflis."

"You had forgotten your fiancée, then?"

"Not in the least. She herself had told me what I must do, exactly as Marthe would, in similar circumstances. Wouldn't you, Marthe?"

As he put the question he turned towards the air-woman, who for all answer gave a careless flick to the ash from her Valencia cigarette.

Zozo continued soberly:

"The Cossacks killed her. But two days after her death, General Martinoff was blown up with his coach."

"Luckily, we have a motor-car to-day," the Baron concluded with a laugh.

"Horse-carriage or automobile, what does it matter? Every man bears his own destiny with him," returned the Russian fatalist.

Indeed, Fate itself seems to have had something to do with the sequel, certain details of which nobody was ever able to explain to our complete satisfaction.

The first news of the accident which followed was brought to us by the French Press, whose indiscretion

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and thoroughly comprehensible indignation proved highly embarrassing at the time.

Early in June, a big Paris daily published an article head-lined "An Interesting Accident," running as follows and quoted from the Madrid *Heraldo*:

"At the Partridge Pass, the night before last at ten o'clock, an automobile accident occurred just opposite the well-known restaurant, Casa Camorra. Several foreigners were rather seriously injured.

"The car was proceeding at a normal speed, when at the point named it crossed another car going in the opposite direction. The two powerful searchlights of the second car blinded the driver of the first, who lost his bearings and ran into a telegraph post.

"The victims were:

"Hans von Kolberg, a wound seven centimetres in length and three in depth, beneath the chin; Joseph D——, a landowner, born in Gori, Russia, and naturalized French, complete fracture of the knee-cap and the femur (his condition is serious); Ernest R——, chauffeur, a Russian, numerous bruises and slight abrasions; and Madame Marthe R——, a widow, born in Blamont, France, left leg injured and general contusions.

"They received the skilled care of Dr. Astola at the Casa Camorra, and were conveyed to their domicile in a car belonging to M. Alvaro de Loma, who happened to be passing that way.

"The authorities at Aravasa are in charge of the case. The automobile was completely wrecked. The German, von Kolberg, was driving at the time."

The French newspaper added comment as follows:

"We may now inform the reader that the Lord Hans von K—— is the Grand Master of the torpedoing committed off the Spanish coast. He is believed to have organized personally the excursions in the Mediterranean, and incidentally the supplies, of the famous submarine U-35, which was in Carthagena on

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June 20, 1916. Pray give careful consideration to this date.*

"It may also be well for the reader to know that two express trains and the Sud-Express pass daily between Madrid and Irun. It is only too easy to see why von K—— and his companion had chosen that road with all its possible accidents and were travelling by night."

But the affair was not so easy to understand as the newspaper declared in its rough conclusion. Until details were brought to us by Captain Z——, I myself could not imagine what had been the object of this nocturnal expedition, whose consequences were passed over by the French and Spanish Press as a whole, excepting only the paper quoted above. A little later, this same French paper was to learn from one of its correspondents all the particulars of Marthe's crossing of the Pyrenees some time before, and her romantic arrival at Boulou and Perpignan.

After recalling the substance of the previous article, the editor of this paper went on to say:

"I asked the *Sûreté Générale* and the Prefecture of Police what they thought of this affair. The *Sûreté Générale* did not make any reply at all. Nevertheless I am informed that the Commissioner of Police at Boulou, where the widow de R—— attracted very much attention in March, 1917; the manager of the hotel at Boulou; the Central Commissioner at Perpignan, before whom she was taken; and the Special Commissioner at Perpignan, would be in a position to give detailed information concerning this mysterious person. There are, furthermore, certain civilian witnesses, a list of whom is in my possession. Finally, the Cabinet of the Prefect of Police has been good enough to intimate to me that nothing is known about this lady with a taste for travelling.

* A reference to the gun-running on the Moroccan coast, intercepted owing to Marthe Richard. See Chapter XIV.

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"The question therefore subsists as I raised it: What were this woman and this Joseph D—— doing, in company with von K——, on the Spanish high-roads, on the night of July 7–8 last? It seems to me that an inquiry is necessary, and if I can believe my correspondents, the results will be highly interesting. I shall, as far as I can, help the members of the Inquiry Commission.

"This lady, calling herself de R—— or just R——, is a brunette, rather tall, with grey eyes and rather hard features. She is provided with male attire in her trunks. Her furs are magnificent. She reached Madrid, coming from Paris, at the end of June, 1917, and put up at the —— Hotel. Notice was soon taken of her there. The German, Hans von K——, made a daily visit to her. A few days later, Joseph D—— came upon the scene, calling himself a Russian aviator. These three persons would remain closeted together for hours at a time.

"On the Sunday when the accident occurred, a magnificent automobile, driven by von K——, came to a stop before the hotel, to the astonishment of the people present. All were aware of the functions of the said von K——, so that they were greatly surprised at his intimacy with this Frenchwoman from Blamont and this Russian who wore the Croix de Guerre.

"Subsequent to the accident, Madame de R——, as she pretends to be named, had herself conveyed back to the hotel, where she remained completely at rest for some time.

"The Madrid papers evidently complied with orders given to them, by not mentioning this extraordinary affair. But an intelligent and curious-minded Frenchman went to seek information at a reliable source.

"That is how it was learned that, in March, 1917, as I have already said, Madame de R—— came from Spain into France, having crossed the frontier fraudulently by night. She put up at the hotel in

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Boulou, alleging that she was an aviator. Then she proceeded to Perpignan and telegraphed to the hotel manager at Boulou to send on her luggage and her mail. During her sojourn in Boulou she telegraphed to a Russian, probably this same D——, as follows: 'Am without news. What must I do?' The reply she received was: 'Come.'

"Requested by the Central Commissioner at Perpignan to explain the meaning of all this, and being brought face to face with the hotel manager at Boulou, she is stated to have uttered threats, saying that 'if she was not immediately set at liberty she would bring about the intervention of powerful friends.' The Commissioner at Perpignan is alleged to have allowed himself to be intimidated by these threats, so that he set this astonishing person free, though with much reluctance.

"It will be easy for the police to verify the details I have given, because there are numerous witnesses, including the manager of the automobile garage at Perpignan, a linen merchant at Béziers, a retired tax collector in the Aude Department, and an ironmonger at Carcassonne. It seems possible that this dame de R—— usurped her name and her passport and that she was not born in Blamont. It is also possible that Joseph D—— usurped someone else's papers. But what is certain is that these two people lived at Madrid in the intimacy of von K——, that is to say, of the Grand Master of German torpedoing along the Spanish coasts. All this is well worthy of attention."

There were several points which I was never able to clear up, however.

To begin with, even after questioning Marthe and Zozo, I could not discover just how this accident, which very nearly cost them their lives, had occurred.

It certainly could not have been deliberately provoked by either of them, since this would have meant not only exposing themselves as much as the Baron,

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but running the risk of being killed while he might escape. No sensible secret agent plots on such lines.

Nor do I see why Marthe was in the car, since von Kolberg so greatly wished to avoid her being identified in company with Zozo. Marthe herself must have had a hand in bringing that about.

It will be recalled that, when planning the expedition to the Barcelona aviation meet, Marthe had suggested to me that she might try to deliver into my hands not only the Baron's " toys " but also the Baron in person. Some such idea may also have occurred to Zozo.

The Baron had mentioned, when making his final arrangements for the propaganda campaign in France, that he must change the money with the help of a man he knew, before Zozo could cross the frontier. I should not be surprised, therefore, if Marthe and Zozo had concocted some mad scheme between them, or perhaps they had only intuitively guessed each other's thoughts, for decoying the Baron into France and capturing him there.

Fate defeated them by prompting the Baron to drive the car himself.

He was not particularly good at this I understand. He had his chauffeur beside him on the driving-seat ; and Marthe has told me that he kept constantly looking over his shoulder into the car, where she and Zozo sat side by side. It is not possible to say whether he felt uneasy, fearing for his safety because they were both behind him, or whether his growing jealousy of this impressive " fiancé " merely prompted him to keep an eye on the pair, so as to know what they were doing. At all events, because of this imprudent and oft-repeated action of his, he did not stand a chance when the other car flashed up behind him.

Another unsolved mystery was the disappearance of this phantom car, whose headlights blinded the Skylark and her companions on the road of the

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Partridge Pass ; the local authorities at Aravasa were never able to identify it.

I have heard it intimated, since then, that Naval Lieutenant Stinton had organized a net of discreet surveillance around his colleague von Kolberg, and that he had set an agent on the track of Zozo, whose arrival in Madrid had puzzled him considerably.

It is furthermore alleged that no sooner had the Baron's great German touring-car left Madrid, bearing him with his new agent as well as Marthe towards the frontier, than a big British touring-car belonging to the Intelligence Service set out in pursuit, overtaking it at the Partridge Pass, Lieutenant Stinton's car pressing von Kolberg's so very close that——

Well ! The effect of a sudden light flashed in the eyes of night-birds is well known.

One thing is certain, at all events. When the Baron returned home he discovered that in the confusion of the accident he had lost his bunch of keys. Among them was the key to his safe.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE HOME OF THE SPY

As already stated, a Spanish touring-car had rescued the Baron and his escort from the ditch. At one moment, they were all four unconscious, or seemed to be, as they lay stretched out side by side on mattresses. Zozo was conveyed discreetly to a good clinic in Madrid. Marthe was being cared for, not at the hotel as the Press had reported, but in the Baron's own home.

Meanwhile the published account of the accident was having unexpected reactions in France.

We have seen that Marthe was born at Blamont. This detail was scarcely needed to make it clear that the blood of Lorraine flowed in her veins. She incarnated to a high degree the two qualities which lie at the very root of the Lorraine temperament : a total absence of emotionality such that no surprise could disturb her, and a tenacity such that no obstacle could be great enough to discourage her.

She was thus truly a daughter of the Marches of the East, the meeting-place of two great races whose tides have constantly broken over that tortured soil. Self-confidence placed in the service of strong will has sprung up, as it were, from the blood-stained ground itself swept by these great ethnical floods. Jeanne d'Arc and Raymond Poincaré had such characteristics in common. And from border to border, throughout all Lorraine, the flame of a fierce and uncompromising patriotism blazes in the eyes of the people, illuminating their features while serving as one of the chief forces for the defence of France.

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Marthe's father, Adjutant Bettenfeld, or Père Louis, as he was familiarly called, had won his corporal's stripe at the Battle of Reichshoffen,* and he had continued to serve as a non-commissioned officer in the 9th Hussars.

He had been on the retired list for five years when the World War broke out. Immediately asking to re-enlist, this last recompense for his faithful service could not be denied him. The Commander of the Nancy area accordingly put him in charge of a small post for the surveillance of a branch railway.

With exemplary zeal and punctuality, he devoted himself to his new duties. He would invariably be the first on the spot, when his turn came for the twenty-four hour watch during which he was responsible. Day and night he would stride along the track, resorting to all the subterfuges of which he was capable as a former adjutant in charge of the barracks. He always hoped to catch some aged soldier of the Territorial Army Reserve at fault when on sentry duty. To punish them for the least offence, he would make them repeat the password over and over again. At other times he would teach them to open fire on anything whatever which might seem odd on the earth or in the skies, for he was haunted by the thought of the enemy's scouting planes.

One single reproach could have been formulated against him. His father had owned a vineyard, and he had learned to love the delightful but treacherous and heady *vin gris* of Lorraine. Having taught twenty successive "classes" of peasant recruits to sit their horses, he was a familiar figure in all the farm-houses of the Nancy region, and at none of them could he resist the glass offered with a good heart by one of his former Hussars.

* Famous for the charge of French *cuirassiers*, the Prussians outnumbering the French by 130,000 to 30,000, August 6, 1870.

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So that, when he went home at the end of the day, with the *Médaille militaire* proudly displayed on his fine old soldierly chest, he was rarely very steady on his pins.

Perhaps this was one reason why he had never been allowed to know that his daughter had been sent by the General Staff on a mission to Spain.

Marthe's mother knew, however; she alone of all the family had been told the truth, and she kept it to herself. It was a secret concerning the national defence, and in France women may guard secrets better than men, especially where the men are young and inexperienced like Marthe's brothers, or fond of the Lorraine wine which is apt to loosen the tongue, as was the case with Père Louis. sons

On rare occasions, when her husband or her questioned her as to Marthe's whereabouts and occupations, Madame Bettenfeld replied evasively that Marthe was engaged in aeroplane exhibitions abroad. This dangerous career sufficed to explain the anxiety which appeared constantly on the mother's features and which often caused her to lose the thread of the conversation.

Marthe had always been her favourite child, whom she loved all the more dearly because the girl had got on in the world. But this was not the only reason for the legitimate pride she felt. Her admiration was stirred also by Marthe's independent spirit, Marthe's audacity and happiness too, after escaping when still young from these cramped surroundings and the monotonous existence in a poor non-commissioned officer's home, where each day's drudgery was but a repetition of what had been done the day before. It was as if the mother's heart quivered in sympathy with each beat of the Skylark's wings.

At the close of an uneventful day, Père Louis had settled down for a comfortable evening, when raps were showered on the door, and the familiar voice of Adjutant Lemerre called out:

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"Bettenfeld! The Colonel wants you!"

"At eight o'clock? What can it be about?" the old man asked.

"I don't know," Lemerre answered. "I was on duty when he burst in like a thunderclap, asking if I knew where you lived. I said every Hussar in Nancy knew where Père Louis lived. Then he asked if it was far away, and when I answered there was only a little courtyard to cross, as your garden joins the quarters, he said:

"'Go and get him at once. If he's in bed, tell him to jump into his breeches and coat, but to make haste.'"

"I'm coming," Père Louis answered. "But it doesn't seem natural for him to be sending for me at such an hour."

As they walked, he kept speculating on the possible significance of it all. Both were silent, aware that something extraordinary must have occurred. Could it be the Lorraine *vin gris*? Père Louis wondered. The Colonel might want to give him a paternal lecture.

He and his fellow-adjutant strode swiftly towards the quarters. They had come as they stood in the *sabots* they wore for stable duty—the usual slippers of French cavalrymen at rest. In the clear August sky, strange glows and flashes were visible, coming from the rockets sent up at the slightest alarm by the anti-aircraft stations. But even the practised eyes of these men could scarcely distinguish, far up in the heavens, the shooting-stars proper to the season.

The two did not attempt to converse. They were meditating deeply on the strange incident which had brought them out. Thoroughly broken as they were to the sense of passive discipline, they felt anxious, and in their depths they were prompted obscurely to independent thoughts.

Suddenly a new idea occurred to Bettenfeld. He grasped Adjutant Lemerre by the arm.

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"I've got it! I know!" he exclaimed. "It's because of the guard duty, day-before-yesterday, when Sergeant X—— came to relieve me. You remember? That idiot who was sent here from the front, a few days ago. I told him to make frequent patrols over towards the Vongeville Ravine, which leads to the only point where the line could be blown up. As I saw he wasn't listening, I repeated the passwords once more. He answered insolently:

"'The password is *snore*! You've drunk your fill to-night, Père Louis. Now go to bed.'

"Then I flew off the handle, and I called him a filthy *embusqué*."*

"Come along," Lemerre answered. "If that's all, it will soon be settled."

A few moments later Marthe Richard's father, Adjutant Bettenfeld, stood at attention before the Colonel.

"You are Adjutant Bettenfeld?" the commanding officer inquired. "Have you any children?"

"Five, sir," the N.C.O. answered. "Three sons, all wounded at the front, and two daughters, one married to the foreman of a factory in Rouen, and the other the widow of a motor-truck driver killed at the front last year."

"What is the name of the last one?"

"Marthe. She's the eldest."

"Where is she at present?"

"In Spain, I believe."

"Is she very well off, since she can travel so much in war time?"

"Her husband was rich. At all events, since his death she has seen to it that we lack nothing."

"Oh! So she sends money to you sometimes?"

"Once in a while, sir. My sons are all wounded, they are generally in hospital or on sick leave. My wife can't do much work any more. We have only

* Slacker.

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my pay to live on, and that's little enough for the five of us."

"How long is it since you last had news of Marthe?"

"Last month, I think. She even sent us a little money order—from Madrid."

"Was it French money?"

"I really don't know, sir. My wife went to cash it. It wasn't far under five hundred francs. I believe it was Spanish money."

"But surely not German money, Père Louis?" asked the Colonel anxiously, his long moustache quivering as he spoke.

"German money?" cried out the old soldier.

He stood more stiffly than ever, as if he feared to lose his self-control, as he continued:

"Marthe, my child, receiving German money? We have never eaten that bread, sir, and if I knew——"

"Pull yourself together, Bettenfeld," the Colonel said. "Remember that you are a soldier, and the soldier must come before the father, to-day. Have courage, and read this. There may not be a word of truth in it. But it was necessary that you should be the first to know."

The Colonel held out to the old adjutant a copy of the paper I have already quoted, relating the interrupted motor-car adventure of Marthe Richard with the Baron von Kolberg.

Père Louis read with difficulty, for his eyes were dimmed by tears. When he had finished, he broke down completely. Tearing his cap off his head, he started slapping his thigh with it, sobbing between the oaths he rumbled out.

"If the paper has told the truth and my daughter did that," he choked, "I shall kill her with my own hands!"

"Calm yourself, Père Louis," the Colonel said, rising. "There may be some misunderstanding. I shall write to-morrow to inquire of the General Staff. They will

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know the truth there. Go home, and show you are a man by holding your tongue, so that your wife may not hear of this yet."

"My wife would die of the shock," he groaned. "Marthe was her favourite child. And to think that for the sake of money——"

He broke off, and continued:

"No, sir, it isn't possible! Marthe was rather stubborn; at times she wouldn't listen to anybody. But I'd stake my own head that my daughter is not guilty."

"When were you to go on duty again, Bettenfeld?" the Colonel asked suddenly.

"To-morrow at 5 a.m."

"Well! You are to remain at home. Lemerre! To-morrow you will send someone to take Bettenfeld's place at his post."

"You're afraid, sir, that there may be two traitors in the family?" Père Louis demanded fiercely, rising to his full height.

"No, Bettenfeld," the Colonel answered with great kindness. "But the paper I have just shown you will be read over all Nancy to-morrow. I don't wish anybody to be in a position to speak ill of you while you are on duty. Now give me your hand to shake, *mon brave*, and remember that whatever may happen, neither your officers nor your comrades will forget you."

Père Louis stumbled homeward through the night.

Marthe's mother, meanwhile, sat wondering what that singular summons from the Colonel could have meant. Bettenfeld had been gone very long.

"Provided only that nothing has happened to Marthe!" she kept repeating.

When her husband returned at last he collapsed on the edge of the bed. Accustomed as she was to reading his thoughts, Madame Bettenfeld knew before he could speak that something was wrong with Marthe.

He tried to deceive her.

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" It's as I expected," he said. " I'm punished for telling that young sergeant, day before yesterday, that he was an *embusqué*. He has filed a complaint against me, and the Colonel has put me under arrest for a week."

" Well, you'd better be getting to bed, because you must be up early to go on duty," Madame Bettenfeld said, still puzzled and worried.

" No," he answered. " I am to stay at home."

" Being under arrest doesn't interfere with your military duties," the old woman objected, for a life-time of experience had made her familiar with military regulations.

Bettenfeld, who saw that he was caught in his own subterfuge, tried to defend his position by saying lamely :

" I can't help it, the Colonel told me I must keep to the house."

" Perhaps he has some more bad news to give you," Madame Bettenfeld suggested.

" Perhaps. Anyhow, I can't say anything."

" Not even to me ? "

" Especially not to you."

" Marthe is ill—or injured ! " the mother cried out. " You have already spoken too much, you must go on, now."

" Well, yes ! Marthe is ill."

" A fall ? "

" Yes."

" Serious ? "

Bettenfeld did not answer, and his wife burst out :

" Will you speak ? You must see you are driving me crazy ! Surely my Marthe can't be dead ? "

" It would be a thousand times better if our daughter were dead ! " the old man groaned. " You would have the truth, and so I'll tell you. Marthe, our daughter, is a spy. The money she sends us—the money you went to collect at the post office, only last

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month—is German money. Do you understand, now? We are the parents of a spy!"

"The Colonel said that?" Marthe's mother demanded, up in arms at once.

"He showed me the newspaper in which it was printed."

"And you believed it? You are both fools, and good for nothing! Our child a spy? Don't you know, then, that it's for our own country she is working?"

The mother had no sooner let out the words than she realized that Marthe might run an even greater danger if she revealed to her husband, at this moment of all others, the fact that Marthe as a double-agent had entered the service of Germany in the interest of France. He would not be able to understand, he would see in it only full confirmation of his worst fears.

Madame Bettenfeld tried to retrieve herself.

"How can I tell what it means—with this accursed war?" she sobbed. "But for all we know, it may be for our country she is working!"

Bent beneath the twofold load of her anxieties and of the secret she must safeguard, the old peasant woman sat with lowered brow beneath the rays of the brass lamp round which she had reared all her children. Her thoughts had borne her, far beyond this modest home, to the mysterious skies of Spain, as she sought to guess where her lost child might be.

Her husband, who had collapsed on the bed close beside her, was forgotten. Presently the shrill call of the sirens rang out for the extinction of all lights in the town, rousing the echoes in the quiet streets, but she did not hear it.

She was roused roughly from her half-dream.

Surely she must be mistaken. But no, there it came again: the sound of many feet, and voices shouting in chorus. It was some moments before she

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could realize what was being said, or that it had any connexion with her familiar lamp. Only when there came to be so many feet, and the voices grew so shrill, that the ground itself seemed to shake and the air to throb, did she hear clearly and understand the howl of the threatening rabble :

" Put out that light, you spies ! "

She obeyed with trembling hands, and felt her way to bed in the dark.

After a considerable while the crowd dispersed, allowing peace to return to the usually quiet street, though not to the home of the Bettenfelds.

Next day Marthe's mother came very near keeping Père Louis company as if she too had been under arrest, for she lacked the courage to go out. But there were necessary purchases of food to be made, and she had nobody she could send to market.

Furthermore, she wished to dispatch a letter to Marthe, who alone, it would seem, could rescue them from their wellnigh desperate position.

She wrote frankly and fully, telling what had happened, and imploring Marthe to come home and prove that all was well, or in any case to see that the truth was made known. She counted up the number of days which would be needed for her letter to reach Madrid, and for Marthe to rush back—or else to see that something was done without loss of time.

Having posted the letter with her own hands, Madame Bettenfeld hurried to market, so as to get the experience over quickly. At first she found little difference in the attitude of people, and she almost felt relief, wondering if by miracle the whole horrible business could have blown over.

Soon she knew better, however. Someone approached, saying aloud to a friend :

" Don't you know her ? She's the mother of the spy ! "

She saw men and women turn round and shrink

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away. Then she understood: the news had begun to spread through the town.

When she returned towards her own house, she perceived that everybody in her own neighbourhood had already heard. As much would be true of all Nancy by evening.

That night, again, there was a gathering at the door, a stone or two were thrown, and there were shouts to extinguish the light. She passed between the lamp and a window; as the dim ray flickered for an instant, there were howls that she had signalled by flashing lights. More stones were showered; and again she and old Père Louis sought refuge in darkness.

Next day she did not venture out; enough scraps of food remained to make such meals as the aged people had the courage to eat in their distress.

The day after, she had no choice but to return to market.

There could be no mistake, now: the whole town knew. Whatever the direction in which she went, people made way for her, avoiding her proximity as if she had been a leper. Friends whom she crossed turned their heads to the other side, pretending not to see her.

"That's the mother of the spy!" a number of people said to their companions, speaking so loudly that she must hear.

One person, whom she had known slightly, harangued her:

"So now we know why the spy's father chose a post as watchman along the railroad. It was in order to let his friends from Germany pass freely! He's been removed none too soon, and put where he can do no harm!"

She reached the market more dead than alive. The vendors insulted her and refused to sell her the vegetables for which she asked. At the baker's shop,

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filled with sweet-smelling fresh loaves, she was rudely informed that the entire supply was sold out for the day.

On her way home a procession of children formed behind her, jeering and flinging mud and shouting in parrot-voices:

"Spy! Spy!"

Stones were showered as she reached the house. She closed the shutters, and did not open them again.

The fight was ended as far as she was concerned. Her husband and she agreed that it was best for them to die. Indeed, scarcely a scrap of food remained, and since they could secure no more, starvation faced them.

But still she kept Marthe's secret, even from the aged and broken-hearted father who would be unable to understand.

Meanwhile, Colonel de R——, commandant of the Nancy area, had kept the promise made to Adjutant Bettenfeld. He had sent to us in Paris a report requesting information about Marthe Richard, and also instructions concerning the attitude to be adopted towards her parents.

I had already left the Counter-Espionage Service for the Intelligence Service, and the reply was drafted by my successor, Lafenestre. He did all that could be done in this particularly delicate case.

There could be no question of announcing through the Press that Marthe was really in our service. It was furthermore unadvisable to acquaint even the military authorities in Nancy with the facts. Luckily we realized this in Paris at the time, though we did not yet know how serious the situation had become in Nancy. We learned only later that public feeling had been worked up to such a pitch that if we had made the facts known even to the authorities, they might have seen no alternative but to reveal them. To their eyes, such action alone might have seemed

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sufficient to clear from suspicion Marthe's aged parents, and thereby perhaps save their lives if only by averting the starvation which would have been a form of suicide.

The solution found by us consisted in sending a Staff Officer on a mission to arrange matters amicably.

Captain A—— drove up to the door which had been pointed out to him. He found a huge crowd pressing against the fence and held back with difficulty by the non-commissioned officer whom Colonel de R—— had been compelled to station there.

During the night some neighbours had written in letters of tar, across the neat white front of the house : " The Home of the Spies." Every once in a while, a shower of stones, accompanied by gross insults, would strike the inscription or else the closed door and shutters.

The appearance of a Staff Captain in uniform, seated in a military car, created a sensation. A shout went up from the crowd :

" They are going to be arrested at last ! "

Captain A—— sprang out and went up to the most enthusiastic shouters.

" Arrest whom ? " he demanded sharply. " The braying asses who have come here, without any good reason, to insult these worthy people ? "

A frozen silence fell on the throng. The officer continued impressively :

" I am sent by the Chief of Staff to congratulate Père Bettenfeld on the conduct of his daughter. She has been wounded at the front as a nurse, and has just been evacuated to a foreign hospital in Paris. Another nurse, a Russian, stole her papers in order to get to Spain. It is about this other woman, who is certainly a spy, that the papers spoke some days ago. But that has nothing to do with the Bettenfeld family."

The officer turned to the N.C.O. on duty before the house.

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"Send Adjutant Bettenfeld to me," he ordered.

The old man came slowly out into the court. He was more bent under the weight of the four days which had just passed, than under the thirty years of his military life.

"Bettenfeld," said the captain, "I have come to tell you, on behalf of the Chief of Staff, that your daughter is to be given the *Croix de Guerre* for the services she has rendered at the front. You may well be proud of your child, and carry your head more erect than ever as you wear the *Médaille militaire* pinned to your Hussar's uniform."

As he spoke he threw his arm round the old man's shoulders, in full view of the amazed populace who no longer knew which way to look.

The door of the Bettenfeld house opened slowly, and a woman in deep mourning came gravely out. There was not a tear on the mother's cheeks, as she stood silently on the threshold which she had not even tried to protect against popular maledictions by telling the truth which she knew, but which she guarded as her daughter's secret.

Even at this moment she did not utter a word of reproach against those who had wantonly insulted her. She had remained a true French mother, worthy of the Skylark; she had made of her silent grief a shield to protect her young, as the mother-bird may feign a broken wing, offering her body as a decoy to draw the hunter away from the nest.

Now, at last, the crowd understood, while the Staff Officer gave a military salute to the old Lorraine peasant woman who had dauntlessly given four combatants to the cause of France: three sons, all of whom had been mutilated at the front, and her daughter, Marthe Richard—the Spy.

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CHAPTER XVIII

BARON VON KOLBERG'S PAPERS

MARTHE had now been for some time in the Baron's home, hobbling about on crutches. But the condition of her leg had improved, and she was anxious to be gone. The heart-rending letter she had received from her mother, a remedy for which we had already found without her knowing it, had increased beyond endurance her state of general exasperation. She had long since been thoroughly disgusted with the entire situation in Madrid, and this was very nearly the last straw.

Although the Baron remained completely under her influence, there were times when his yoke was extremely hard to bear. He became frankly brutal in his moments of jealousy, which had grown more frequent with the image of her "fiancé" Zozo in the foreground. And it must be said that Zozo played very ably his part of a love-sick swain, with long silences and enraptured glances from his mystic Slavonic eyes, which were well calculated to make a rival uneasy.

At such times, the Baron was prompted to suspicions against her, and he would renew his threat of delivering her over to the Spanish authorities.

"It means a prison sentence for you," he would repeat. "The fact the messages are written in sympathetic ink leaves no doubt at all about their nature. Remember that. I shall not hesitate to denounce you, if ever I find you are betraying me to the French."

So far, she had always succeeded in reassuring him. A jesting word from her lips would often tip the scale in her favour. If the scene had already gone beyond

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the limit where that would suffice, then she would bring to bear against her adversary all the batteries of her stinging irony. She would proclaim herself to be exactly what he feared, and only too eager to leave him on any pretext—until he was brought to her feet, humbly apologizing for his stupidity.

But the strain, oft-renewed, was telling on her. Once or twice she had very nearly lost her head, when von Kolberg had complicated matters by striking Flot with his stick.

He had always hated Marthe's faithful little companion, who indeed reciprocated these sentiments of the Baron's. Flot was insanely jealous of this stranger who was constantly intruding between his mistress and himself. Perhaps he suspected, with a dog's quick sympathetic understanding, Marthe's true sentiments towards von Kolberg.

Accordingly, it would happen that in the very midst of a dangerous scene, when it was already as much as Marthe could do to retain control of the situation, she would also have to protect her dog against the Baron's vicious rage. Then an outburst of utmost violence would be precipitated on the Baron's part, in which Marthe would have to meet fire with fire. The temptation to tell him the whole truth, with such evidence that it could not be doubted, would sometimes become so strong, under these conditions, that Marthe could scarcely resist her craving for this long-deserved moral satisfaction which, she well knew, would end her career in Spain—and perhaps also her life.

To render the situation even more critical, the Baroness had by now roused to the fact that there must be more between Marthe and the Baron than merely the business relations about which she had been told. Without being sure just how far matters might have gone or how serious a rival Marthe might be for her, she could not doubt that her husband was fascinated by the Frenchwoman to such an extent that

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he really obeyed no other law. This protracted stay of her rival in her own home, during much of which the Baroness had been absent in Granada, seemed to be sufficiently justified by Marthe's injured leg and the necessity for keeping the Baron's agent in seclusion. But it disturbed the carefully adjusted balance maintained so far, and this could not fail to bring matters to a head. Marthe would then surely lose an invaluable ally who had contributed materially towards rendering possible her very difficult task in Madrid.

The hour therefore seemed to have struck for decisive action; and Marthe was all the more disposed to think so because she had completed her plans. They were the same which she had sketched out to me a year before. Ever since, she had continued ceaselessly her endeavours to secure my full consent for them.

Accordingly, she said to the Baron:

"I don't wish to be an encumbrance to you any longer. And yet, for some time to come I must avoid the 'Institute,' because the Press will be after me there. Besides, the French have increased their guards who are constantly holding the place under surveillance, night and day."

The Baron could not deny this. What he still did not know was that this watch was kept at the explicit request of Marthe herself.

"What do you want to do, then?" he inquired anxiously. "It seems to me that, at the hotel, the danger would be as great."

"Just now it certainly would be," she agreed. "But there's another solution. I am thinking of your private office. If you see no objections, you and I might exchange quarters, for a short while. When the French see that I have ceased going to the beauty parlour, they will send their agents to look for me elsewhere; they wouldn't dare keep a regular watch over you. So you will be able to make your appointments at the 'Institute,' which will temporarily be

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your head-quarters, and where nobody will interfere with you; while I settle down incognito in your Calle Vintilla office, where nobody would ever dream of looking for me."

After some hesitation, and probably also after sounding Count von Strasse, Baron von Kolberg gave his assent.

But although she was now entrenched within the fortress itself, Marthe could not begin her operations without the help which I had promised to give her sooner or later, and which she now demanded.

Zozo was so seriously injured that for a long time to come even Marthe could not transform him into a good burglar. But as soon as he was able to stand, she entrusted him with the mission to return to France, bringing to me a plan of the Baron's office with details of the project she had evolved.

The first difficulty we had to solve consisted in bringing the aviator back home under conditions which would appear convincingly natural to von Kolberg. In order to effect this, Marthe resorted to her usual method of attacking first, and continuing to attack, so that her adversary could not recover his breath for a counter-offensive.

One day when the Baron happened to be alone with her, she coolly informed him that her friend Zozo was leaving for Paris next day.

"Why, you are out of your senses!" the Baron exclaimed. "Surely, you have read the French newspapers? He will be arrested and shot."

"Not at all," Marthe contradicted. "He will instead win a new palm for his *Croix de Guerre*."

"You are joking!"

"I have never been more serious in my life. Zozo and I were trying to get rid of you by provoking an automobile accident."

The Baron was startled for a moment or so into wondering whether, after all, there might not be some element of truth in this new invention of Marthe's.

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But he quickly recovered himself. Perhaps his judgment was furthermore blurred by the reflection that he would be well rid of his troublesome rival, the lovelorn "fiancé."

"Excellent, excellent!" he laughed. "Do you really think, however, that the Chief of the French Intelligence Service will swallow such a yarn blindly?"

"Could you swear that you yourself didn't believe it, just an instant ago?" Marthe demanded triumphantly.

"I admit frankly," said the Baron, "that I did put the question to myself. As, indeed, I did about those mushrooms of yours," he added in a burst of laughter whose heartiness showed how complete was the confidence he felt in her.

"There! You see for yourself!" Marthe said. "Only, you breathe freely at present, because just as I was the first to eat my own *fondue* of mushrooms, so it is now Zozo who has broken his leg.

"By the way," she added suddenly, for the purpose of keeping the conversation in her own hands, "what became of your friend Fuentès, who was so nice and took such very good care of me, that day when I was poisoned?"

"I may as well tell you," the Baron said after considerable hesitation, "that I have reason to believe he has passed over to the service of the French."

"Your famous ace?" Marthe mocked. "Von Strasse must be ragging the life out of you!"

"No, quite the contrary, he was very decent. Indeed, it was he who gave me the first intimation of it. He has an ace of his own, who keeps him informed of everything which happens in the French Counter-Espionage Service, or rather, the Espionage Service. Because, you know, your friend the captain has changed his quarters from the Boulevard St. Germain to the rue de l'Université."

"No, I didn't know it," Marthe said, in all sincerity, this time, since she wrote to me exclusively at my

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Rue Jacob address. "You are certainly very well informed. And it is an agent of the captain's who keeps you posted?"

"Von Strasse is always kept informed about everything," the Baron replied. "It seems Fuentès has crossed into Germany under an assumed name. He is now being sought for there. As for your captain, I think we have him at our mercy and he will soon change his address again, but next time he will be in a prison."

"Have they an Espionage Service in the prisons also?"

"No, he will be sent to a French military prison," von Kolberg declared.

Out of the information so complacently given to Marthe by the Baron that day, only the points concerning Marthe's chief were borne out by events.

As for Fuentès, he had been executed by the firing squad at Vincennes some months before. I had, however, arranged for the strictest secrecy to surround this event, so that Marthe might not be suspected of having betrayed him to us.

It was, however, true that von Strasse had an agent at the French Intelligence Service, with whom he enjoyed the most cordial terms imaginable. But I had been appointed Chief of the Intelligence Service two months before, and von Strasse's agent was in fact a double-agent. So I myself had conveyed to von Strasse, through this channel, the news that Fuentès had betrayed the Baron, to whom von Strasse of course immediately transmitted the information.

Marthe won out, in her controversy with the Baron concerning the aviator. All objections to Zozo's proposed return to France were removed.

The Baron gave him a few thousand pesetas, as indemnity for the accident which had punished him so severely, and went on to promise that when Zozo could organize some propaganda on the desired revolutionary lines, further subsidies would be sent to him.

Zozo started off accordingly, armed with the Baron's

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viaticum and with a letter to me from Marthe, who kept a rough draft which she has since put in my hands.

She submitted the written text to the Baron, who approved it; ostensibly, it gave an account of the motor accident. But between the lines it contained a secret communication in sympathetic ink.

Even to-day, I cannot re-read this text without deep emotion. It brought me one of the very first intimations of the fate which was about to overtake me; many other intimations were to follow, from most of my agents abroad, during the weeks which immediately preceded my disgrace. But Marthe's letter also showed, as the others did, the loyalty of these agents towards me. They all sought to defend me. Indeed, Marthe went even further by avenging me in advance.

Her secret message to me ran:

My dear Captain,

My position has been simplified since the motor accident, I can no longer return to France, or von Kolberg will definitively break with me. He accepted only after much hesitation the version of the accident which Zozo will give you.

I am therefore condemned to remain in Madrid until the end of the war, and I cannot reconcile myself to the idea. I have endured too much, my patience is exhausted. After suffering as you know, I can only put into execution the plan which I submitted to you long since.

You will remember the conditions on which I agreed to return once more to Spain last April, in order to rejoin a man whom I loathe to the very depths of my being, and subjecting myself once again to his whims and fancies.

And now I am driven distracted at the thought of leaving him without a word after making him happy, so that I should not be avenged for all that

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my self-respect as a woman and a Frenchwoman has had to suffer from this contact with him.

The affair cannot end thus. I feel this all the more, because he and all the German services fear you and they are seeking to bring about your ruin. You are even directly threatened. As a result of I don't know what deliberate machination, you will soon be put in prison.

Consequently, while avenging myself I may also save you.

I am now established in the Calle Vintilla, in the Baron's second office. I have the key to his safe, but I don't yet hold the combination. That should be easy enough for a specialist. If you consider it is too dangerous to attempt the operation in Madrid, we shall be at San Sebastian in a few days. We could operate there under the conditions foreseen last April, when you promised me you would intervene.

At all events, a solution must be found, or everything is finished as far as I am concerned and I shall smash the whole machine. Zozo will confirm this to you. MARTHE.

It was early in the summer. Von Kolberg had already retained for the season the villa which he generally took on the Basque coast, and he went there at frequent intervals, while awaiting the time for settling down there with his records and documents.

Obviously, that would be the best place for Marthe to carry out her plan.

When bringing her letter to me, Zozo explained that she would like to have a box of *bonbons* containing a powerful sedative. She would make the Baron eat some of these, so as to be assured that he did not interrupt her while she was engaged on her task.

A chemist who was on friendly terms with us gave us two varieties, slightly different in aspect, one being totally ineffective and one containing a fair dose of

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chloral. Zozo himself, having wished to experiment with the latter, remained in consequence sound asleep for twelve hours.

They would then do very well for Marthe's purpose. She planned to wait until she found herself alone with the Baron, and then the safe being opened by her accomplice, the entire contents would be removed. But she had also allowed for the possibility that the safe might resist even the most skilled efforts. In that case, she was prepared to remove the safe itself. And therefore she must be completely protected against the possibility of being surprised by the Baron. She would then have the safe blown open and would seize the contents, after which she would make a break for the frontier.

Audacious as was her project, it stood an increased chance of fulfilment because some weeks previously I had succeeded in having Pedroso engaged by the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits. He now travelled regularly in the sleeping-car between Madrid and the Spanish frontier. One of his trips would thus supply us with a man in our own employ when we needed his services.

But the preparations I was endeavouring to make were subjected to many delays. Without my knowing why, I had for some time past felt that a singular and indefinable atmosphere prevailed in my surroundings. The only indications as to the significance of it all came from my agents abroad, who, as has been seen, would once in a while advise me to be on my guard. But for these flashes of lightning, the clouds hung heavily about me.

In September, one of my agents, who had established connexion with "The Fräulein" in Antwerp, reported to me that she had said:

"We must absolutely get rid of that odious black captain."

My very charming adversary had given me this name, I

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suppose, on the strength of the thick black beard I then wore.

A fortnight later, I was severely taken to task in the course of a meeting held by the Secret War Committee. I had friends there who told me of the matter, adding that the situation was so very grave that in my own interest they advised me to apply for transfer to another post.

An effort was even made to induce the Chief of the General Staff to make an exchange between myself and the officer in charge of the operations for the Secret War on the Swiss frontier, the pretext argued being that, although serving indirectly under my orders, he was my superior in rank and so the situation should be reversed. The Chief of the General Staff refused to consider this plan.

In spite of the many ominous warnings that the storm was about to break over my head, I thought but of my task. At the time, I was resolutely striving to create, in the face of wellnigh insurmountable obstacles caused by the practically hermetic closing of the German frontier, a complete Intelligence Service in Germany itself, where we had almost nobody left to act for us.

Meanwhile, Marthe was multiplying her appeals to me.

In order to appease her, I had established in Madrid a new *liaison* agent, who studied with her all the details relative to a possible removal of the safe from the Baron's second office, to which the Baron himself had now returned.

Marthe was at the end of her tether, and my own problems had almost reached the climax which was to precipitate an entire succession of events.

At the end of October, on the strength of a complaint filed against me by my former military chauffeur, Pierre Lenoir, I found myself compelled to vacate within forty-eight hours my office at the General Staff, and to prepare my defence. The suspense lasted

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for fifteen months. In the end, my opponents, wearied with waiting, seized upon a pretext. A cryptogram received by mail* was turned to account so as to land me in a cell of the Cherche-Midi military prison, as von Kolberg had foreseen.

My agents were greatly alarmed by the prosecution instituted against me and furthermore protracted by being deliberately entrusted to the most aged among the civil examining magistrates.

All that the secret agents I had sent abroad could now do was to seek cover in neutral or even enemy countries. Those who attempted to return to France were either expelled if they were foreigners, or else sent to the Santé Prison. The whole of our Intelligence Service was dislocated.

Marthe was among the very last to be fully aware of the danger overhanging her also. Von Kolberg was probably still in ignorance of the fact that I was no longer with the General Staff, and our *liaison* agent in Madrid had thought well to conceal from her my disgrace.

In November, she wrote a letter to the Service, declaring that she had resolved to return to France. It was only then that our agent judged necessary to tell her what had happened to me.

At the news, Marthe was instantly up in arms. The Frenchwoman whose services had been rejected by the military authorities at the beginning of the war knew instantly that she must plunge into the very thickest of the Secret battle. Her reflexes had been steeled by twelve years of sports and fifteen months of espionage. The wings of her plane had been struck by the squall, but her hands had already grasped the controls, and her judgment was both swift and sure.

" Pedroso, when are you to return to duty with the Sud Express ? " she asked.

* See Biographical Preface.

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"In twenty-four hours," he answered.

She reflected for hardly an instant, her plan was already formed.

"Good," she said, speaking quickly. "Reserve two compartments for me, one in my own name and one in the name of the Baroness Davidoff. Things are going to happen hot and heavy, but I know I can count on you."

Pedroso watched her in silence, wondering what she had in mind. But she did not tell him. In fact, she did not entirely know. As usual with her, she was leaving a great deal to circumstances, preparing only the start and the finish while keeping steadily before her eyes the object of all her efforts.

"There may be a lot of breakage," she continued, "but this time I'm in dead earnest. It's for the Captain's sake. Where are you sleeping to-night, Pedroso?"

"In the courier's room at the Palace Hotel," he answered.

"Oh no, you are not! You are sleeping on the sofa in my room. And by the way, Pedroso—you might bring your automatic with you."

"All right, Chief!" Pedroso answered with a delighted grin.

She had an appointment with Baron von Kolberg for the early part of the evening, at the bar of the Palace Hotel. When she came to keep it, she had already brought together much of what she had wished to carry away from Spain with her, so as to be prepared for all eventualities. So she waited patiently, and without a trace of emotion, for the Baron to arrive.

There was no witness to what followed except the barman, and he scarcely counted. He was accustomed to lovers' quarrels, and was trained never to pay attention to such trifles.

When von Kolberg came in, Marthe spoke very quietly, as if to discuss a shopping expedition for the next day.

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" Baron," she said, " I am leaving for Paris to-morrow. I must have fifty thousand pesetas."

She noticed only then that the Baron was in a particularly vile temper. But if she had been conscious of it before, it would have made no difference.

" What's this new caprice of yours ? " he snapped.

She eyed him coldly.

" It's no caprice," she said. " I'm giving you an order. Fifty thousand pesetas, failing which I shall go to see your Ambassador and tell him everything."

" What is there for you to tell ? " asked the astonished Baron.

" That I was your slave for a year," she said.

Before he could recover, she dealt her second blow.

" Also that during that entire time I was betraying you for the sake of France."

The Baron grew suddenly livid with rage and with fear.

" You wouldn't dare do that ! " he exclaimed.

Her impenetrable eyes remained fixed on him. He lost his head. Springing up, he grasped the stool on which he had been sitting, and raised it as if about to brain her, shouting :

" If you dare attempt such a thing——"

Marthe did not flinch. Still in perfect control of herself, she said quietly :

" You would do better to use that stool as a seat."

Her extraordinary calm defeated him, as it had so often done before. He observed her for some moments, with the stool raised as if he were about to strike. Then he slowly lowered it and obeyed her by sitting down.

" And now listen to me," she continued. " It won't take me long to say what I have to say."

He maintained a stubborn silence. They were quietly facing each other. If the barman had looked round at that moment, he could have suspected nothing of what was occurring, unless he had observed the

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tense quality of the Baron's immobility. As for Marthe, she was complete mistress of herself.

"Your friend von Strasse was right when he warned you against me," she said. "I have been playing a part, all along. I may even say I have starred in it. And I have never for one moment ceased making a fool of you personally."

The Baron's face, which had been a deep purplish red, grew livid at these words. His eyes, staring fixedly, seemed to protrude strangely from the sockets. He was awful to see.

Marthe smiled ironically as she continued in a relentlessly even voice:

"It's all been acting, on my part, and you have never ceased being a fool—never for one moment, do you hear? The scene at Urumea was a melodrama I staged as soon as I saw the terrace to which you led me. The affair of the beauty parlour was a comedy I got up for your especial benefit. The Manzanarès sisters, both of whom were put in prison, and Fuentès, who was executed by the firing squad at Vincennes six months ago, were actors in tragedies of my making. The trip to Buenos Ayres and the death of the weevils made up a perfect comic opera. And your famous U-109, sunk off the coast of Malaga, was a lurid play fit for the Châtelet Theatre—a modernized version of 'Twenty Thousand Miles Under the Sea.'"

The deep, apoplectic hue had returned to Baron von Kolberg's face. His eyes continued to stare wildly, but he could not believe what he heard. His mind kept coining excellent reasons for the rejection of all these strange suggestions which some mad caprice was prompting her to pour into his ears. An actress, yes—but the play was here and now. All this story was utterly preposterous.

She had finished speaking, and sat silently watching him. There was a long pause, which he found himself compelled to break.

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"It can't be true, it's not possible!" he cried out, his voice breaking in a groan. "A woman like you, Marthe, couldn't live up to a lie like that, a whole series of lies, while remaining consistent in them for so protracted a period."

He laughed suddenly; it was a hollow laugh, with a sinister echo. Perhaps he thought that for once—for the first time in their experience, indeed—he had caught her and held her at his mercy.

"I understand what all this means," he chuckled grimly. "You are planning to leave me, and you want money. You are always wanting money. This is sheer blackmail. But you shall not get away with it."

Marthe knew that the moment had come for her long-desired and crowning revenge.

"You won't believe me?" she cried. "You must have the whole truth, then? I can show you a proof that I have always hated you and betrayed you."

"Proof—what proof?" gasped the Baron.

"Take it—read that!" said Marthe, snatching from her bag a small folder or booklet which she thrust under the Baron's eyes.

It was her pension certificate as a French war-widow.

Only then did he really understand.

Frenzied with rage, he wrenched the paper from her grasp and tore it across before brutally crushing the fragments against Marthe's face.

But she did not flinch under this new outrage, just as she had not flinched under his kiss at Urumea.

She drew away from him.

"You have destroyed my certificate, Baron," she said with that cold, complete calm of hers which always cowed him. "All right. Now you must pay me the capital as damages. I demand no longer fifty thousand, but one hundred thousand pesetas. Then I shall return your letters to you. For I kept them all, you know."

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" You forget, young woman, that you are in Madrid and at the Palace Hotel," von Kolberg snarled.

" You, on your side, forget that I was in San Sebastian, and at the Continental," Marthe answered.

" What do you mean by that ? " he demanded.

" Simply that this afternoon I once again wrote a letter, to be delivered somewhat later. Only it was addressed to the French Embassy, instead of to my consul, and I took care not to entrust it to your ' excellent Kauffmann.' It is you who should be on your guard, not I. By to-night, all the French services in Madrid will know about you and will have their eyes on you, Baron. So you had better take me at my word, when I tell you that there is nothing which you can do except to pay."

Von Kolberg, in a state verging on collapse, made one last effort at resistance. Perhaps he could not take Marthe at her word, even yet.

" Where do you expect me to find a hundred thousand pesetas ? " he asked.

" You have all night to look for them—and you have your friend von Strasse to give them to you ! " Marthe concluded the interview. " And now, good evening—— See you to-morrow ! "

He neither moved nor spoke as she left the hotel bar with a firm, serene, and deliberate step.

With it all, she had not said a word about his safe, nor could he have thought of inquiring. He had not yet suspected that she held the key ; and in his blind infatuation he had failed to attach any particular significance to her presence in his office, where she had for so long been free to prowl about at will.

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CHAPTER XIX

HOW THE SKYLARK ESCAPED FROM HER CAGE

I DO not know what Marthe's meditations may have been, during the hours which followed. Probably she thought very little, spending a restful night in anticipation of the fray which was bound to come on the morrow.

At all events, she was certainly on the alert in her subconsciousness, not knowing what desperate attempt might be made against her by the infuriated but also badly frightened Baron.

Those love-letters of his, which he at present knew that she held, sufficed to prove that he had made a fool of himself a thousand times over.

But except where feminine powers of fascination were concerned, he was undeniably an able as well as clever man. So that if he stopped to consider the situation seriously, he might wonder also about the possible fate of certain other papers of his, which were not devoted to sentimental matters.

The night passed uneventfully, however, the faithful Pedroso not being roused once from his peaceful slumbers on Marthe's sofa, much less finding any occasion to use his automatic.

Next morning, the situation changed suddenly. At eight o'clock, raps were showered on the door with such energy and persistance that Marthe concluded the Baron must be there, prepared to force an entrance if he were not promptly admitted.

Experience had taught her that he was least dangerous, as far as she was concerned, when she had him

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entirely to herself, without witnesses. So she hustled Pedroso into the bathroom before she threw open the door.

It proved to be not von Kolberg, but an inspector of police, looking impressive and ominous, as Spanish police officers, and plain policemen too, know how to look.

He harangued her in French, with a formal politeness which might in itself have sufficed to terrify a nature less undaunted than that of Marthe.

"Señora," he said, "I am sent by the Director of the *Sûreté Générale* of Madrid. I must ask you to follow me to my office, where a communication will be addressed to you."

"A communication? From whom?" Marthe demanded coolly.

"You will know that directly," the inspector answered severely. "I am not here to reply to questions. But I am furthermore instructed to request that you bring with you those letters of which you have cognizance."

He evidently expected Marthe to feign ignorance, or perhaps even to deny their existence. He was prepared for many forms of resistance, and indeed for almost anything except what followed.

With her most placid air, Marthe addressed him as a grand lady might do, when gently reproving a well-intentioned but undeniably clumsy and tactless intruder.

"My dear Inspector, allow me to give you a little piece of advice," she said. "Go straight back to your chief, making all the haste you can, and tell him that in his own interest he need not trouble himself about this particular case. You might add that yesterday I sent to the French Embassy all necessary information on the subject."

The mention of the French Embassy, and the familiarity with which Marthe referred to the information she had sent there, produced an evident effect

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on the inspector, who nevertheless recovered himself, saying:

"You will explain about all that to the Director. Get those letters and come with me."

"I have not finished," Marthe continued, unmoved. "I must now telephone to the German Embassy."

"To——?" The inspector could not believe his ears.

"To the German Embassy," Marthe repeated firmly.

"But you said the French Embassy half a minute ago," the inspector objected in a dazed way.

"Oh, no!" Marthe returned sweetly. "It was yesterday I communicated with the French Embassy. This morning it is the German Embassy I must ring up. You see, little affairs of this kind are best dealt with directly between the adversaries themselves, and the Spanish authorities have no occasion to come and thrust in their nose."

With that she went over to the telephone, and in the presence of the inspector, now startled out of all possibility of speech or action, she called for the German Ambassador's residence.

The answer came quickly enough. But getting access to the Ambassador in person was another matter. Undiscouraged by an entire series of rebuffs, she kept repeating that it was Madame Richard speaking and that she could deal with nobody except His Excellency himself.

At last someone at the other end seemed to understand.

"Oh! Madame Richard—von Kolberg?" a voice asked.

Smiling in spite of herself, Marthe merely said "Yes."

She got the connexion a moment later.

"Your Excellency, this is Marthe Richard, an agent of Baron von Kolberg, speaking," she said. "I have a very grave and urgent communication to make to you. I see no alternative but to ask to be received by you in person immediately."

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The voice at the other end advised her to see the Baron.

"That is impossible," she answered. "It is precisely a matter which concerns him and about which I wish to inform Your Excellency while there is yet time. Otherwise a very serious scandal involving the Baron—and perhaps others also—will break out, here in Madrid, before midnight. I assure Your Excellency that there is no other solution."

The voice over the wire told her that she would be received at the Ambassador's residence if she called at noon.

The inspector had listened to everything which had been said. He shrugged helplessly. Here was a woman who rang up embassies when and as she pleased, and told them what they must do, even though they represented nations engaged in a deadly war against each other. The inspector made up his mind that he could only let her have her way, at least for the present.

He retired with considerably less dignity than he had displayed when making his entrance.

On the stroke of twelve, Marthe was in the handsomely furnished suite of drawing-rooms at the German Embassy.

The Ambassador, Prince von ——, advanced and greeted her politely. He was a refined-looking and rather elderly man, small in stature and wearing glasses through which he peered curiously at her.

"In what way can I be of service to you, madame?" he inquired.

"By compelling Baron von Kolberg to allow me to leave Madrid to-night," Marthe answered, speaking quickly. "I have been on very friendly terms with him. I need not say more, need I?"

The Ambassador nodded gravely, as if to intimate that he understood the situation thoroughly.

"But it is absolutely necessary for me to leave

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Madrid to-night," Marthe continued. "The Baron has refused to do his duty by me. But I have his love-letters. I shall let you have them for fifty thousand pesetas."

"You cannot blackmail Prince von ——, madame."

"No. But I hope the Ambassador will consent to satisfy my demands."

"Not under pressure of blackmail."

"It is not blackmail, but a vengeance," Marthe said. "I have served the Baron for fifteen months and I have grown thoroughly disgusted with him. I asked for the money I need to go to the Argentine, and he refused to give it to me."

"The Argentine! But you have only just returned from there!" the Prince exclaimed.

"Yes, I had been sent on a mission. I liked the country, and now I want to go back."

Marthe paused for a moment to allow the Prince to recover from the first shock she had dealt him in order to prepare the way for the real surprise, which she had not dared to spring at once.

"Well, if I can't go to the Argentine, I must return to France, because I can't remain here after what has happened," she declared philosophically. "But, first, I must get rid of this key."

As Marthe held it out, the Prince gazed at it rather blankly for a moment, before asking sharply:

"What key is that?"

"The key to the Baron's safe, containing his most secret documents, in his office where I have lived for two months."

There was an electrical tension in the atmosphere for some instants, during which the Prince watched her with silent concentration.

"I shall give you nothing for the letters you mentioned, madame," he said sternly. "The Baron is a gentleman, he will know what is incumbent on him. If not, I shall take care to make it clear to him. But

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that is his affair. The key is another matter. How much do you want for it ? "

" Not one penny, Your Excellency. Nor indeed for the letters either," Marthe answered.

She spoke slowly and deliberately, now that she had reached the critical point which had been the sole object of all her manœuvres since the day before.

" There is only one thing I want, and that is to leave Spain free and unmolested."

" But you are free, madame ? " the Prince said interrogatively.

" In Madrid, yes. But, as you must be aware, when I telephoned to you this morning I had just been summoned to the offices of the *Sûreté Générale.* If I had gone I should have been compelled to reveal —well ! much which I believe you would greatly prefer for me not to say. Because I could prove my words, and nothing could then avert the public scandal about which I warned you. Instead, you have very courteously received me. But I am planning to leave Madrid by the Sud Express to-night, and I want your promise that on my way back to France I shall not be exposed to any annoyances whatsoever coming from either yourself or the Spanish police."

" You have my word of honour, madame," the Prince replied. " I shall not interfere with you in any way."

" Nor request the Spanish police to do so ? " Marthe insisted.

" Certainly not."

" Now that I have your word, I shall go," Marthe said. " Here is the Baron's key."

The Prince accepted it and rose, bowing silently, as she left the room.

She had retained her complete calm, walking through the impressive suite of rooms as if she had come for a social call. But as she reached the main entrance door of the Embassy, she stopped.

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An automobile had just drawn up at the kerb, and a man, or rather a madman, leaped out. It was the Baron, with haggard eyes and purplish face. The magnificent self-control, to which his long training in the navy had accustomed him when in public, had fallen away from him like a discarded uniform. He was beyond the possibility of taking any thought for appearances.

He rushed up to Marthe threateningly.

"So you dared?" he demanded. "Have you told the Prince everything?"

"Everything except that I have been betraying you all along, Baron," Marthe replied smoothly. "You may explain about that as you wish—if you can find a way of escaping the consequences. But I am carrying away your love-letters. I am willing to deliver them, as agreed, if Halphan will meet me at the frontier with one hundred thousand pesetas."

"You shall not get one peseta from me!" the Baron shouted. "And I swear you shall not leave Spain with my letters!"

"And I, Baron," said Marthe, "promise you that I shall cross the Pyrenees with whatever I please and to your very beard!"

She passed on into the street, paying no more attention to the Baron than if he had been a statue. Indeed, in his helpless rage and bewilderment, he had grown almost as rigid as one.

Calm as she had remained, she knew that the most difficult and dangerous part of her adventure remained immediately ahead of her. A great deal had been accomplished by eliminating possibilities of official action on behalf of the German Embassy, and her well-known character as a German secret agent made it unlikely that the Spanish police would take any initiative against her in the absence of such direct authority.

Yet there were unquestionably several charges on

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the strength of which the Baron could take individual action. There was her demand of money in exchange for the letters, even though she had relinquished the key by her own volition; and there had been her secret reports addressed to him in sympathetic ink, which he had so often held over her head as a menace to her liberty.

Going straight back to the Palace Hotel, she began packing at once. Her very last action, before the hour came for leaving, was an operation in which Flot was directly concerned.

To his immense surprise, he found himself gently but resolutely stuffed into a covered basket so much too small for his size that he filled it as a sausage fills its skin. That should really have sufficed as an outrage to his better feelings. But to make matters worse, an outer case was slipped over the basket, so that it looked like a travelling-bag.

Flot, who could no longer either move or see, could now scarcely breathe. And then, as crowning insult, Marthe sternly ordered him not to make so much as a single sound. If he had been less deeply offended in all his most sacred notions of the proprieties, he would have tried to disobey. But Marthe had trussed him up so successfully that he would not have stood much chance even for getting out a fair-sized squeak. So in the end he accepted his unreasonable punishment philosophically, as he did most of the events in life.

It was observed that the lady who left the Palace Hotel to drive to the station that evening had no dog, but only the necessary hand-bags and portmanteaux beside her in the taxi, as anybody could see.

The journey to the frontier was like most such journeys in those days. There was the usual quota of commercial travellers—and it was astonishing how many "commercial travellers" there could be when world-trade had fallen to a low level in most of its usual activities; but nobody else was in particular

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evidence. The night passed quietly, and nothing of note developed until the next morning at seven-thirty when Irun was reached.

On the station platform many Spaniards and a few strangers stood waiting. Among the latter, one, at all events, was a person of consequence, to judge by the numerous marks of outward respect shown to him by the Special Commissioner of the Spanish police.

He was none other than the German Consul at San Sebastian. Accompanying him was a man wearing glasses but readily recognizable as Heinrich Halphan.

The passengers' luggage was searched while their passports were being examined, and the entire train was subjected to a minute inspection which became extremely strict when the sleeping-car was reached.

Pedroso, ordered by the Spanish Commissioner of Police to give the list of his passengers, declared that there were two ladies aboard, a Russian, Baroness Davidoff, and Madame Marthe Richard, a Frenchwoman.

"The numbers of their compartments?" the Commissioner demanded.

"The Baroness Davidoff is in No. 2. Madame Richard was in No. 4, but she got out at Valladolid, where she said an automobile was waiting to take her to Barcelona," Pedroso announced.

"Open the compartment!" thundered the German Consul.

Pedroso obeyed with exemplary zeal and dispatch. The compartment was empty.

"I must see the Baroness Davidoff! Order her compartment to be opened!" came the next command from the consul.

The commissioner nodded assent to Pedroso, who rapped loudly on the Baroness's door.

Indignant protests were heard from within. Presently

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the door was unlocked and permission to enter was called out in an irritated voice speaking German.

A lady with abundant blonde hair lay in the bed, under a mass of blankets which came up to her nose. She had continued throughout to protest vehemently —still in perfect German.

"What is it? Who is disturbing me in this way? At such an hour, too! Surely we have not yet reached France!"

"That's not the right woman," Halphan grunted. "I know for a fact that Marthe Richard doesn't speak a word of German."

He went out, slamming the door behind him, in disgust.

"She has slipped through our fingers," said the consul. "Telephone immediately to Barcelona, so that a warning may be transmitted to Ronceval and to all points along the road."

The train steamed out of the station, and the frontier was crossed. Marthe, jumping fully dressed out from the bed-covers, shook off her golden wig, allowing her own raven hair to appear.

This time she frankly fell on worthy Pedroso's neck and embraced him.

"Well, old chap! The Skylark had them at last—with your help!" she added. "Here we are safe and sound—papers and all!"

Flot had his word to say, too, barking joyously. It was because of him that Marthe had required an exaggerated number of blankets which might have aroused suspicion.

When the shower of raps had come on the door, he had tried to bark, as in duty bound, to protect his mistress. Marthe had seized him by the muzzle to shut him up, whereupon he had started to fight. She had therefore rolled into bed with him, piling on all the covers she could reach. And while she was practising her very best German on the consul and

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Halphan, she was keeping Flot's jaws locked with one hand and with the other was preventing him from wriggling, as dreadful thoughts flashed through her mind to the effect that if her blonde wig happened to slip, there was no human resource left by which she could retrieve it.

A fortnight later our decoding service handed to my successor the translation of a wireless message emanating from the German G.H.Q. and addressed to His Imperial Majesty's Ambassador in Madrid. It conveyed a request that the King of Spain be good enough to secure our permission for the Baron von Kolberg to return to Germany by crossing French territory.

Just a month later the Baron, attended by two French inspectors, delegated for that purpose by my friend Priolet, crossed the Spanish frontier at Cerbère, bound for Pontarlier and the Swiss frontier.

The fact that he was travelling in a sealed coach did not in any way affect the Baron's arrogant air. On this occasion his desire to put up an impeccable appearance had indeed been carried to such a degree that he had replaced the familiar shade glasses by a monocle.

I have never known the sequel, as far as he was concerned. Perhaps at the very period when the Paris court martial was acquitting me of the accusations brought against me, the Berlin court martial may have condemned the Baron von Kolberg as being guilty of the charge formulated in the preliminary report drawn up on his case, before he left Spain with our consent.

It was to the effect that he had committed " grave imprudences " in the discharge of his duties.

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CHAPTER XX

CONCLUSION: THE NEW LEGION OF HONOUR

THE treachery and the power of the merciless Secret War, as well as the variety of means lying at the disposal of this new engine of destruction, can be judged by those who have followed Marthe in her voyage of exploration to the very heart of the Espionage battle, faithfully related by me in the pages which precede.

It is a form of warfare which, at the present day, renders possible an entire series of unexpected developments and deadly blows. These, in turn, are borrowed from the subtle and at the same time brutal operations of world-wide competition, all of whose methods are accordingly adopted, including camouflage and surprise effects.

The technique of this particular struggle passes through kaleidoscopic changes regulated at the incredibly swift rhythm of modern science in its countless applications. The eternal problem of Life or Death looms in novel and ever more startling aspects before individuals as before collectivities subjected to the disturbing alternative of Peace or War.

All this, I suppose, has given birth to the mystic doctrine which causes the old evangel, Peace upon earth to men of goodwill, to be preached to the peoples, while juridic systems are being multiplied and further messianic appeals are heard at each stage of our slow return towards world-balance.

Genoa and Rappalo, Thoiry and Locarno, The Hague and Geneva—these are the refuges, but they are not free from danger, standing as they do on the very brink of the precipice. Meanwhile, the inspired prophets advance towards the illusion of a burning bush which in truth is but a hollow shrub. Their

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voices seem to rise in a cry suggesting the words spoken at Elsinore, " To be or not to be——"

Eternal wail of the weak among mankind! And the reply to haunting fears comes in the form of threats and controversies.

Each one is busy, the while, forging his secret arms and clamouring that his adversaries must be disarmed.

Therefore we should heed the warning voice of Marthe Richard when she calls out to us to keep a good watch.

The Skylark indeed symbolizes not only the whims and fancies of a race which, at the very first sign of danger, wings its way swiftly up while establishing order and discipline in its own midst. She furthermore teaches us to beware of all words which glitter, and of such deceptive appearances as Lark-Mirrors whose purpose is to lure both Reason and Sentiment to their constant undoing.

Zozo, who is a man of wide understanding, makes a remark at this point:

" Marthe and I should be sent for a turn at the Disarmament Conference! We should speak about the arms which must be destroyed first of all. They are the arms with which war itself is forged, and they are far more dangerous than those with which war is waged.

" You know well enough, Captain, that I have no love to waste on the police. And yet, I should willingly join their ranks for the purpose of a certain highly useful work. There is a splendid opportunity for a brigade of Guardians of the True Peace, in connexion with the League of Nations. For such a task as that, I should gladly become a policeman."

The anarchist of the old days is entirely right.

The horrible nightmare of war, in whose toils humanity has been held ever since its creation, will be shaken off only on the day when the nations establish, at Geneva or elsewhere, a World Intelligence Service and Peace Court (W.I.S.P.C.), charged with seeking out and repressing all crimes and offences against humanity itself.

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This will not come to pass to-morrow.

Meanwhile, we may express to von Kolberg and von Strasse our sense of appreciation for having taught us at least one useful lesson. It is that in their country, the Iron Cross of the First Class can be awarded not only at the front but also to combatants in the Secret War, whose practices are still regarded with scorn among us. We may therefore be grateful for having had the way pointed to the new and broader horizons which they have imposed upon us for conducting modern warfare.

It is certain that nobody in France has yet troubled to confer a decoration on the Skylark, that proverbially rash bird which sings in the teeth of the gale and which fully deserves the tribute paid to it by our ancestors the Gauls, when they chose it as the emblem of their country.

Marthe Richard had, at all events, more than justified her right to the nickname. And she will, I think, be the first woman spy whose name has been recorded in the history of France.

But an entire legion of ardent former combatants stands behind her, and their stories, too, will be worth telling some day.

"A new Legion of Honour?" some of my old comrades-in-arms may inquire sceptically.

Yes, and why not?

While we were engaged in carrying out the request of Joffre that we save France from being treacherously assassinated from behind, the suspicions of an entire people were turned against us.

And so it came about that, standing like sentinels in the night, as we had been ordered to do, we ourselves were the ones to be stabbed in the back with a symbolical dagger from Eibar, very much like the mysterious little Spanish girl found afloat close to the foot of the Urgall Rocks, in Bilbao Harbour.

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CHAPTER XXI

AFTER-WORD

Cannes,
April 12, 1932.

To
My Friend Warrington Dawson,
My Brother-in-Arms in the Secret Battles.
My dear Friend,

I wish to thank you for having consented to edit "Marthe Richard" in English for your compatriots, and I am proud that you should be the one to do it. For no one could be better qualified than you, whose great human heart was the golden door through which I learned to know the soul of America at the beginning of the war, while discovering the deep and secret affinities which united us.

When the storm raged over the world, threatening to destroy both Right and Freedom, the two foundations on which all progress and all civilization must rest, a rainbow was providentially cast across the Atlantic from shore to shore, forming a heavenly star-spangled bridge over which our La Fayette and your Pershing were to pass.

I recall with intense emotion certain conversations you and I had in September, 1914, immediately before you left for Bordeaux, where you had agreed to carry out a highly delicate mission with which I had entrusted you for "The Tiger."

We would exchange ideas as we walked slowly along the deserted Champs-Elysées, which were not yet illuminated by the dim but consoling and symbolical

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flame which has burned under the Arch of Triumph ever since our soldiers passed there, mingling fraternally in the hour of victory, as they had done during the days of the arduous struggle.

I refused to despair of the future of France; and you retained a filial faith in America.

And so we walked together in the dark night of History, with nothing to guide us except our blind trust in the immortal destinies of our two countries, those daughters of one same ideal. They indeed resemble each other so closely that, with all the many fine qualities they possess in common, they share also the same fault: in their confirmed generosity, they cannot learn to beware of others!

You who, in the years which followed, were a witness to my fight against the silent enemy whose earliest activities we had observed together, knew better than anybody else that if we very nearly lost the war, it was because of the Secret Agent who strikes only in the dark.

It is because of him that, since the Armistice, our two countries continue to meet with so many difficulties, so many pitfalls of all sorts, strewn along the mysterious path of Peace.

When I was a child, I read and re-read many times the prophetic work by your great writer of adventure stories, Fenimore Cooper, entitled "The Spy." I must confess that this was often in my mind as I wrote "Marthe Richard."

They are, in a way, the brother and the sister; and their adventures serve at the same time as an example and a warning for your country and mine.

I wish to recall to you an episode of a personal nature, which happened to me in the summer of 1918.

For the past ten months, I had been waiting for the Government to make clear at last the accusations brought against me on the strength of a denunciation

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emanating from my former chauffeur, who was finally condemned and executed by the firing squad.

I had not yet secured the permission to appear before my judges. And yet, ever since August 4, 1914, when Joffre had sent for me, I had either created, or had had under my direction as Chief, all the successive Secret Services of the General Staff: Telegraphic Censorship, Counter-Espionage, Defence Against Contraband of War, Aerial Propaganda Across the Enemy's Lines, the Inter-Allied Bureau, the Intelligence Service, and finally that active fighting organ, the Fifth Bureau, which united them all and animated them.

Although incriminated, I had remained free and could travel in France wherever I wished—except to the front, where I wanted to fight, but that was forbidden me.

Well, one morning in August, while I was with my family at a watering place in the Allier Department, I received a telegram from one of my former officers, Lieutenant Hallaure of the Cuirassiers, then an aide-de-camp to General Requichot, in command of the Tours Army Corps Area, where the American Army had recently landed and had established its base.

The telegram read:

"Return immediately to Paris."

I said to myself that some highly important development must have occurred, since a message so imperative in its brevity was sent to me by one of the most trustworthy officers I knew.

Accordingly, I took the train that very day at Montluçon.

Soon after we had left the Bourges station, five coaches, including the one in which I had reserved my seat, were derailed at a particularly dangerous point on the line.

By great good luck, I had left my seat just a minute before, so that I escaped when these coaches went hurtling down into the deep ravine of Salbris.

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The cause of this accident was never thoroughly established.

An American relief crew was sent to our rescue, and a few hours later I, who alone among the passengers had remained uninjured, was able to continue my journey to Paris.

I found the lieutenant awaiting me at the station, in the company of two American Army officers whom he wished me to meet. One was Major Henrotin, now a colonist in Morocco, and the other was a young captain whose name I have forgotten but who could probably be identified without much difficulty.

Lieutenant Hallaure said to me :

" Captain, allow me to introduce to you two officers belonging to the American Intelligence Section. Since reaching France, they have vainly attempted to secure information from the Allied Services concerning the organization of Espionage and Counter-Espionage in our armies. Nobody has been able, or perhaps willing, to advise them."

I was considerably bruised by the shock of the accident, and furthermore I was exhausted. I had spent the greater part of the afternoon in efforts, under a torrid sun, to rescue several of my unfortunate fellow-travellers, caught in the wreckage. My clothes were blood-stained and torn to tatters. But I limped off homeward, taking with me my new American comrades.

The United States had not yet gone dry—and we found some champagne in the cellar.

By working throughout the night, when dawn came we had managed to draft a first rough scheme for organizing the Secret War. I have since been told that our vigil had not proved to be a waste of time. But I did not again get in touch with your General Staff—which had probably received intimations to the effect that I was not desirable as an adviser.

I was therefore unable to do for your compatriots what I had done for our British comrades, to whom

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I had handed a complete and detailed plan for a rationally and methodically organized Military Intelligence Service. As for the other branches of Intelligence work, we were only very modest pupils, as compared with the British.

If I have recalled this episode, it is because I have often deeply regretted that I lost contact with your Intelligence Section. The experience of France, added to the youthful and ardent activities of the United States, would have formed a collaboration which, even if it had not succeeded in hastening the end of the war, would surely have prepared sounder bases for peace.

So we return once more to the advice :

" Have confidence in yourself, but beware of others."

With that axiom addressed to generous but overconfident America, I would sum up my experiences as a veteran of the Secret War.

When our two countries have awakened to a complete realization of its value, then and then only may war be brought to an end in the world.

That is the last secret which I confide to you, my dear and great friend, after confiding so many others.

But you need not keep this one to yourself.

Faithfully yours,

G. LADOUX.

THE END

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